The SOUND PROJECTOR 12th ISSUE 2004

the SOUND Projector 12

Records:
Swedish Sound Art
Underground America
Sound Poetry Revue OU
The New Blockaders
ONCE Festival
Noise, Drones, Improv
Electro-acoustic
Feedback composers
Field recordings

Interviews:
PETER STAMPFEL
PHILIP JECK
GREG KELLEY
LASSE MARHAUG
GUILTY CONNECTOR

The Sound Projector 12th Issue

Published 2004

Editor: Ed Pinsent
The Sound Projector
BM Bemused
London WC1N 3XX
United Kingdom
ed@soundprojector.demon.co.uk
www.thesoundprojector.com
Printed by The Book Factory, Essex

PERSONNEL

Written and edited by ED PINSENT

Contributing writers
CHRIS ATTON
JENNIFER HOR
JONATHAN HELLIER
JOHN BAGNALL
HARLEY RICHARDSON
AARON ROBERTSON
RICHARD REES JONES
JANSON HARRISON
MEGALO ROBERTS

Contributing visual artists
DENNIS TYFUS (2, 48, 132, 152)
ALASDAIR WILLIS (42, 56, 74)
ED PINSENT (remaining drawings)

The front cover is a pastiche of the work of the Russian artist El Lissitzky (1890-1941).

Entire contents © Copyright 2004 by their respective creators. Unauthorised use of any text or image in this magazine may be unlawful.

CONTENTS

Columns devoted to individual musicians

44 KEITH ROWE
144 WILLIAM BASINSKI
146 PHILIP BROPHY
8 THE NEW BLOCKADERS
136 SPARKS
143 BURNING EMPTINESS
43 SCOTT FOUST / TART
68 REYNOLS
133 V/VM

Featurettes

20 WE ARE CURIOUS (FELLOWS): SWEDISH SOUND ART
76 WE ARE CURIOUS (RED WHITE AND BLUE): NOISES FROM THE AMERICAN UNDERGROUND
122 REVUE OU: SOUND POETRY BOX SET
49 CHRIS ATTON'S COLUMN
110 RICHARD REES JONES' COLUMN
58 KILL YOUR TIMID NOTION FESTIVAL
100 FREE 103.9 RADIO

Regular Record Review Sections

3 ATOMS OF PURE NOISE
139 THE DISCURATOR'S DEN
125 THE DRONING ONES
147 ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC
34 THE CRACKLING ESTHER (ELECTRONICA)
27 FIELD RECORDINGS PLUS
88 GUITAR MUSICS
53 IMPROVISED MUSIC
103 IN THE ART GALLERY
10 JAPANESE MUSIC
154 ROCK MUSIC
129 SMASHINGS, SLICINGS AND MAD INVENTORS
151 WORLD MUSIC

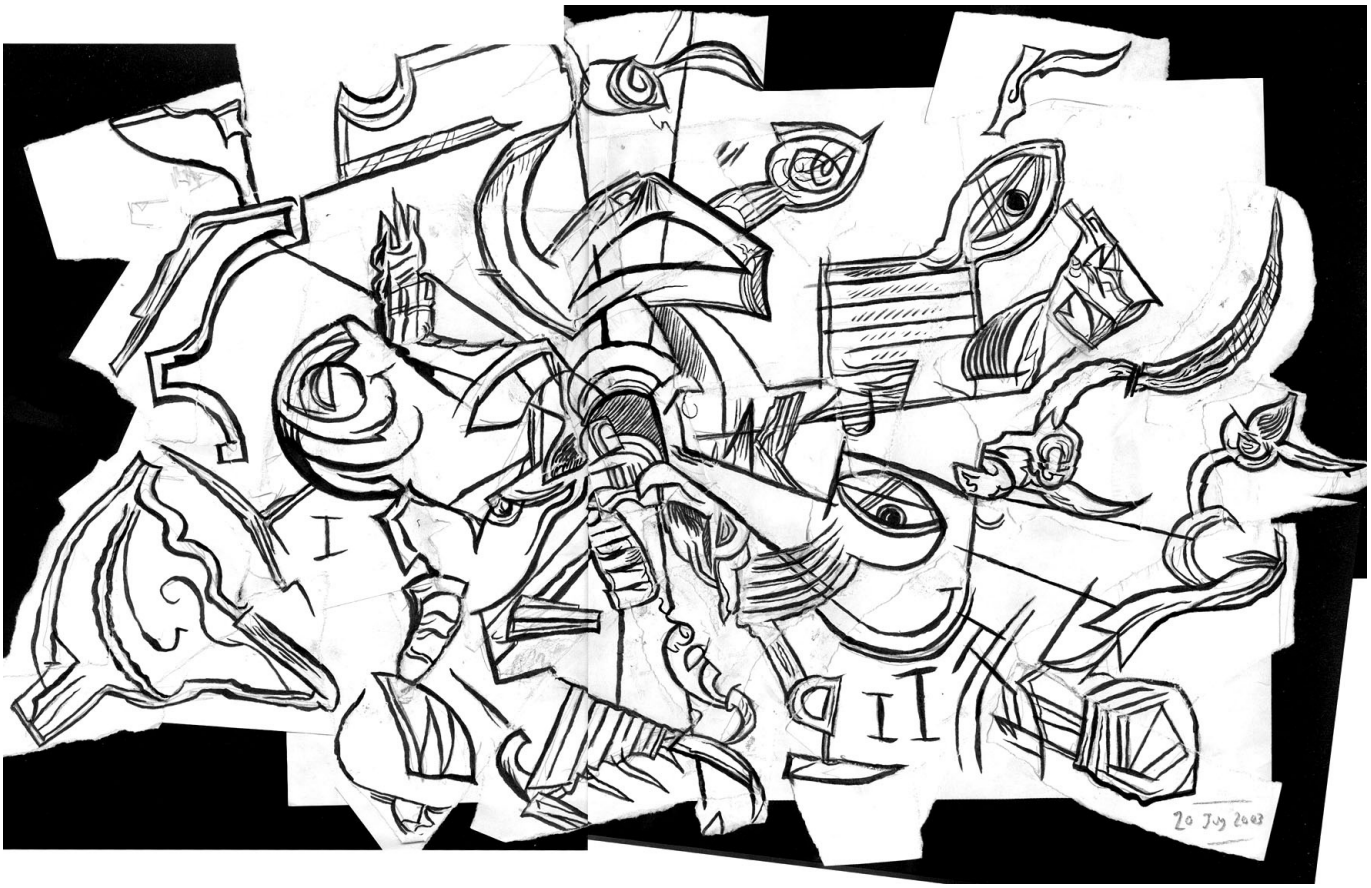
157 INDEX to Record Reviews

Interviews with Musical Folk

92 Peter Stampfel
114 Philip Jeck
61 Lasse Marhaug
84 Greg Kelley
17 Guilty Connector
46 Jean-Marc Foussat
137 Paul Winstanley

AtOms Of Pure ★N-O-I-S-E★

SPLIT THE EARDRUM OF THE UNWARY WALRUS, USING THESE SHELLAC-MOUNTED DANDIES FROM THE HORSE-TROTTING ANCIENT DAYS



Jason Lescalleet's Due Process

Combine XIX, XX

USA WE BREAK MORE RECORDS WELP-003 VINYL LP (2003)

Two side-long tracks, pressed in 'audiophile' vinyl, sports fans - and what a staggering racket this one do be. Side one reminds me of the time I went over Niagara Falls in a barrel...unfortunately, due to an oversight in design stage of my plan, it was a metal barrel - and the water roaring all around its surface produced the sort of sonic disturbances to my brain which, frankly, I hadn't reckoned with. However, that story is just one of countless buried memories which sprang to life when I spun this fiendishly complicated record. No sooner had I begun to reminisce than the mood was disturbed by a harsh voice loop, a troupe of drum machines which had been driven insane after their spell of captivity in a zoo, and further nameless reprocessed horrors of all stripe - walls of feedback so vast they had to be delivered by a truck, mangled guitars crawling out of metal trashcans like zombie-instruments, and several remnants of old vinyl floating back from the past to pester me, like so many black bats. Side one thus grows more chaotic and generally impossible to decode, or to follow...pretty wondrous really!

Side two seems at first somewhat less 'eventful' after the witch's cauldron of side one, but even these apparently relaxed drones and quieter turntabling effects will commence to trouble you after a while. Almost sub-sonic and imperceptibly quiet in places, side two slowly emanates seething pools of menace and disquiet. Extremely adventurous and with a highly developed sense of dynamics. While you listen, soak up the screen-printed artwork on the cover. The grungy abstract splurge on the front

is fascinating enough (you can read it as a large cross or a window looking out onto a scene of degraded black murk), but the verso is even better - a huge, irregular black square which obliterates everything underneath it. There may be a cross-correspondence between the visual and sonic aesthetic here...

For this two-man group effort, Lescalleet contributed the composing, working with improvised experiments he'd conducted with his buddy Ron Lessard - although how you can 'compose' elements as unstable and dangerous as these is beyond my mental span. Besides, who can tell who's doing what? 'Jason has buried the recognisable elements,' cackles the press release in the voice of a deranged maniac, 'selecting minute fragments for prominence in the mix'. Ron Lessard was equipped with some diabolical hardware - including a four-arm turntable - this much we know. Ron's something of a legend in the underground noise-nik stakes in the USA. He founded RRRecords, home to many excessive and unnecessary noise releases in the 1980s and 1990s. Lessard has used the Due Process name to describe most of his collaborative projects, which he's been conducting in gothic mansions and underground cellars for 20 years now. Lescalleet is from New England, has worked with John Hudak, and his recorded collaboration with Greg Kelley (Forlorn Green) remains a fave of apocalyptic doom-noise with me, although his solo CD mattresslessness on the Cut label wasn't quite as crucial. No matter. Describing himself as a 'tape loop master', he wins his spurs here with this imaginative and innovative collage of unknown sounds, assembling everything with loving care into an ill-fitting mess - a mess that makes perfect artistic sense by its own standards, if you will lend it ears and figure out the free-wheeling rule book Jason abides by (before he jettisons it out of the car window, that is). This strikes me as a highly modernistic and, somehow, very American take on the electro-acoustic process. In line with Pierre Sheaffer, Lescalleet is concerned with disguising and transmuting his sound sources, but unlike any European artist working in that tradition he denies conventional beauty in the finished results. This record is by contrast informed by an edgy, trashy, punk aesthetic. Bloody brilliant, in other words.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Jay Sullivan, 18 Nira Ave, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130-1107, USA

Kevin Drumm

Land of Lurches
USA HANSON RECORDS HN104 CD (2003)

So noisy and frightening (in a fun way) is this recording that the artist not only had to release it on Hanson Records (it probably being too hot even for Mego to handle - ha!) but he reduced it to 36 minutes on the CD version, that figure being the maximum the recording can run for before the CD player refuses to play any more or it threatens to blow up in your face (and the vinyl version has an even shorter playing time due to the excision of a short track that appears on the CD - the technology is finally rebelling against us). A steady hammering drone of a million micromachines introduces the CD, later to give way to an orgy of obese alien slugs in a state of musth onto the sonic landscape. Then comes a phalanx of heavily armoured tanks to clear out all the carnal excess. I think those tanks are using high-intensity laser rays and giant flamethrowers to blast those monsters into ectoplasm. Off they go then, floating into a new plane of existence full of ominous promise and all sounding very spacey and full of echoes.

A sudden intermission occurs here: that cute cuddly seal on the front cover of the CD has just flopped in and is begging for fish with a vocabulary of wheezing howls and raucous growls. A marching band whose members are still figuring out how to play their instruments (and which end of their steel pipes has the mouthpiece to blow in) turns up at the same time and competes with the pet pinniped for attention. Naturally our flippered friend doesn't take kindly to this intrusion so both sides start baying at each other and before long there's biffo and clobbering of one another while the woodwind section of the band continues to tootle away.

Back to the main show: the ectoplasm is floating about in a glacial funk on a distant hydrogen giant of a planet. Soft buzzy drones and susurrating winds herald the arrival of a steady but continuous current that encompasses the ectoplasm and bears it far, far away - to the millions of micromachines still busily chugging away, their maws open to receive the new energy. Presumably the cycle will begin again.

In this short recording, Kevin Drumm scales the lowest levels of alien fornication with all its slimy and flesh-slapping glory to the heights of ethereal if glacial refinement with a break for comic relief along the way. He doesn't make too clear though if the seal managed to get his fish - the critter still doesn't look too happy and what happened to the marching band isn't clear either - I think he's eaten them all. Hey, down boy, down!

JENNIFER HOR

www.hansonrecords.com
www.surefiredistribution.com

KK Null

Kosmik Engine
VOIDSTAR PRODUCTIONS / IMPORTANT RECORDS
IMPREC-005 / VSCD-008 CD (2002)

Maestro of evil electronic music KK Null is at it again with Kosmik Engine - 50 minutes of the aural equivalent of sinister nanobots being injected into your veins and then migrating to your brain and other organs to turn you into an unwilling robot slave to carry out various dastardly deeds aimed at reducing all humankind into unthinking hosts for these silicon parasites. Tape loops and samples of often very high-pitched needling noises and of the most mercilessly pummelling deep rhythms are all pushed to the max to ensure the ultimate alien penetration in this ultimate scifi / horror scenario. All the tracks are repetitive in a brutally cold and unforgiving way - track 2 in particular brings to mind the execution pointillist stencilling machine of Franz Kafka's 'In the Penal Colony' except that in the KKNullesque universe this machine would never fall apart but no-one would ever be able to turn it off either. An aggressively predatory energy powers all these tracks, track 6 being very notable in this regard (a mini-martial arts flick with knife-edged karate chops throughout) as is also track 12 (a digital Grim Reaper scything everything in its path).

On a couple of tracks (track 7 and one earlier than this) you can detect the little nanobots within the noise textures communicating among themselves. Of course they're not about to let us know what they're plotting during this very early stage of this their conquest of the Earth - we can only guess what they might be thinking and saying about us. Given the current sorry state of this planet's affairs and the direction in which politicians in the Anglophone world are leading us, I imagine the creatures are laughing and thinking they can do a better job at running the New World Order. I entirely agree with them!

Can't really think of who I'd recommend this CD to except maybe someone like myself whose brain is already so fried by previous Japnoise releases that there's precious little grey sludge for the nanobots to claim - hee hee, there's some reason to be a no-brainer after all. This CD can be quite a terrifying experience. Don't enquire what possesses Mr Null to create music like this - reread this review if you have to ask!

JENNIFER HOR

www.voidstarproductions.com
www.importantrecords.com
www.kknull.com

KK Null

Erg per Galaxy
USA OPPOSITE RECORDS OPCD02 CD (2002)

Hard on the heels of Kosmik Engine comes yet another installation of sci-fi/horror Nulltronix - our man Kazuyuki certainly has been a busy beaver over the last 2-3 years! I assume KK Null recorded Kosmik Engine and Erg... more or less at the same time though Erg... sounds like a later work with longer and fewer tracks that have a more complex and dynamic structure and development with an underlying sinister mood, yet retain an inhuman quality. We are almost in mini-soundtrack / sonic documentary territory; track 4 in particular (once again the tracks have no titles) could describe an attack of chattering insectoid aliens upon an unsuspecting Earth creature, like your pet cat or chihuahua pal. Some pieces like track 1 and 5 come close to classic Japanese noise territory but have sufficient empty space and changes in mood and pace not to qualify as noise proper. Considerable craft has gone into the music's making, it can be quite subtle yet it's not without a sense of humour, track 9 being a fine example of Mr Null's fiendish sense of fun.

After Erg..., it is hard to say where KK Null might travel next in the Nulltronik universe - the CD points in a more ambient, serious and less cartoony direction though who will be steering is another question - will Mr Null be in control or will his little silicon alien friends insist on backseat driving?

JENNIFER HOR

www.oppositerecords.com

Massimo

Hello Dirty
AUSTRIA MEGO 063 CD (2002)

Latest release from this Sicilian electronica fiend is an aggressive, thumpy, sexy noise-beast...leads off with some 10-12 minutes of earsplitting, chaotic and densely rhythmic racket, spread over the first five index points yet amounting to a single terrifying onslaught. This highly exciting opening - a panoramic view of the future, when everyone who's important will be made out of tensile-strength steel - is pretty hard to beat, an alarming, distorted, and generally unstoppable missile of noise. The juggernaught launches forward relentlessly, changing gear but with no intention of slowing down. Somewhat surprisingly, Massimo used to be something of a minimalist as I recall - wielding his Powerbook and mixing desk like stilettos in the hands of a Sicilian assassin. Why, only three years ago he was a guest on the first Bip-Hop compilation, living out his Ryoji Ikeda fixation. His music was always very fierce though, so now perhaps all that's changed is that the gloves are off and no quarter is given - nor asked. In this way I suppose he's now building on the Merzbow / Alex Empire approach, although thankfully Massimo spares us the brutal / brutalising drum machines (at least until very last track). Very precise in execution and planning too; probably put together in the computer over course of several week's fiendish, obsessive programming, laid out with a stopwatch and graph paper, then machine is turned on and programme is set to run at ten times normal speed. Run amok, in other words. Chunk-chunk-chunk. Squeal-squeal. Massimo's diabolical glee in setting loose this monster is evident. Pound-pound-pound. Grate-grate-grate.

Sexy / dirty? Massimo may be out to remind Mego of the 'noise is sexy' dictum, one of the label's guiding lights in its original (though not at all seriously meant) 'manifesto'. At first, CD felt like it was conveying that 'soiled' feeling you get as you guys drunkenly browse your hard-core porn (deliberately or by mistake) on the Inter-Web. But erotic content is blatantly spelled out in sleeve art; classic 'innocent' Japanese cartoon girl on cover is about to insert banana in her vaginal shaft. Inner spread is fully realised computer-graphics like Toy Story, depicting cartoon girl about to masturbate at home; previous Massimo release pictured there on her bed, rams the point home in more ways than one. Connection with sexy electronic gear hard to miss; Massimo thinks mobile phones / discman / anglepoise lamp all contribute to erotic experience. This same innocent cartoon face occurs on CD label, thus making entire product look good enough to eat like a piece of Hello Kitty candy.

Here we are at index point five. Music calms down slightly after that last fade; but it's still a very full sound on this new piece, as full as an egg (as fat drunken men used to say, for fear of spilling their guts when being carried home). Now grows more urgent; almost like 'clean' heavy metal guitar soloing, supposing a souped-up transistor amp could be Dolbyized to that point of crystalline opacity. Massimo is delivering a modern 'rock' LP in line with the vague definition of same, according to the secret Mego ethos. Reach index point 6, and realise now CD is growing harsher and bleaker towards the end, and there are 12 tracks in all...this one tells story of a broken-down cyborg, running out of control along metal track, shooting random beams from glass eyes as its head revolves crazily. Next cut introduces further insane chuttering rhythms, not without strong hint of violence behind each second's blasting; there's certainly a strong 'thuggy' element to this tough-guy music, Massimo belting his opponents about with fierce abandon as he displays his tattoos. 8th cut is 'purer' noise, wind-buffeting whomps and thumps with maximum distortion. Following piece is almost sarcastic in its application of a mocking tune / rhythmical pattern, like a schoolkid's taunts...then follows something indescribable that's all over the shop, wiping out life forms in immediate vicinity with laser-death bursts, flamethrowers, explosions and spaceship alarms everywhere. All stops pulled out. Only two more tracks and you've made it to the end of this hellish voyage into mayhem, and you'll be a better man for it (whether girls enjoy this also, I have no idea). Be prepared for 'shock' ending of last cut, that pulls away the rug from you just as you're getting 'into' the groove of it.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.mego.at

Donald Dietrich

Dietrich
FRANCE ELEVAGE DE POUSSIERE EPP08 LP VINYL LP (2003)

Dietrich - second ever solo record from Don Dietrich. The first one is Chinese Root Letter, a now rare single on Ecstatic Peace!. He whacked out this LP in one single heated session in July 2002, locked in his bedroom like the frenetic masturbator that he is, equipped only with a tenor saxophone, an amplifier, and a bunch of tasty special effects including an echo unit and whatever device it is that makes playing the saxophone sound like he's gargling with his own saliva. A brilliant echoing noisy madness results - '1979' kicks off and features a sax blowing from the other end of a wind tunnel, while Dietrich attempts to stay on his feet, and pauses to take in huge gasps of air. A glorious yawping, high-damage quotient pile of aural garbage. On tracks like 'Acid Reflux' or 'Beef and Broccoli', Dietrich demonstrates perfect synthesis of man and machine, of blowing with electronic effects - all done by someone who can control these things with the expertise and sheer nerve of a half-mad nuclear fission scientist engineer with a steel-tipped hammer in one hand and a very sensitive hair- triggered atom bomb in the other. His playing on 'Douche Das' beggars belief, sounding like two or three instruments playing at once. The record's dedicated to his great friends Jim Sauter and Donald Miller, and when Borbetomagus play as a trio it's like this record plus two, yet with 100 times the strength and force; but then on this intimate record you can enjoy the luxury of studying the fine grain and detail of Don's technique and sound, like seeing a slaughtered and quartered corpse in full gory detail - exposed muscles, flayed nerves, shattered bone and dangling capillaries a-plenty. There's a joyous wild spirit in the playing, as of a holy preacherman leaping onto the pulpit seized with the

outpourings of the holy ghost and chattering in tongues. Even though the fingering work is heavily disguised by the amp and effects, you can still make out the funky, flash-animated movements of lightning-fast fingers and clenched knuckles working like high-speed pistons, underneath the layers of treatments. Another French release (see Junko's wailing LP in the Japanese section), this one with an Ira-Cohen inspired sleeve shot of Dion's toad-like visage distorted in a silver dish, and again with a mistranslated sleeve note by Yves Botz that is priceless in English or French - 'Hey you fearless listener, then jump upon this Ouroboros's back which is made of metal and phlegms!' Metal and phlegms - I never leave home without 'em. This French writer invokes the spirit of Iggy and the Stooges, and with good cause. A great release - who can resist it?

ED PINSENT 11-2003

36 rue de pot-a-mousson, 57000 Metz, France
dustbreeders@libertysurf.fr

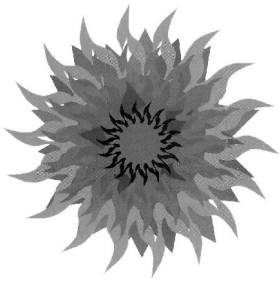
Daniel Menche

Invoker
GREECE ANTIFROST AFRO 2016 CD (2003)

Daniel Menche's Invoker is a pretty wimpy, pallid noise - really just bad-tempered solo grumbling from one of the scene's more notable 'bad' boys, not that any of that transgressiveness means anything these days. Menche plots revenge against the world and releases nasty CDs out of spite more than anything else. Maybe he's really just a spotty nerd with a chip on his shoulder. Cover has a nice sunburst symbol that looks like a pagan Winter solstice sign, and intention of this release is to return to the 'age-old practice of sound being used to call upon higher deities for strength and guidance', but despite Menche's attempts to 'invoke' this pagan power, he couldn't invoke a visit from the Avon lady.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.antifrost.gr



Love 666

This is the new American National Anthem
USA NO LABEL NO NUMBER CD (ND)

Guitar noise workout by Love 666, which is Dave Unger's band, though it sounds like one guitar only - maybe Dave himself doing a solo turn. It's real bargain basement stuff; cassette bedroom level at best. Distortion and feedback heaped up around clumsy Deep-Purple styled riffs, just this side of guitar-wanking piffle, eventually settling into a dozy drifting noise riding the low tide surf of amp fuzz. Not really loud enough, nor are its subtleties assisted by poor quality recording. Keiji Haino it ain't! So where is the political content implied by the title, or satanic undertones implied by artiste name? Nowhere in sight; for the former, recommend you turn instead to MC5, or Shockabilly burning an American flag on stage; and to Black Sabbath or some nameless black metal band for the latter.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.freerockandroll.com

Chris Cutler and Thomas Dimuzio

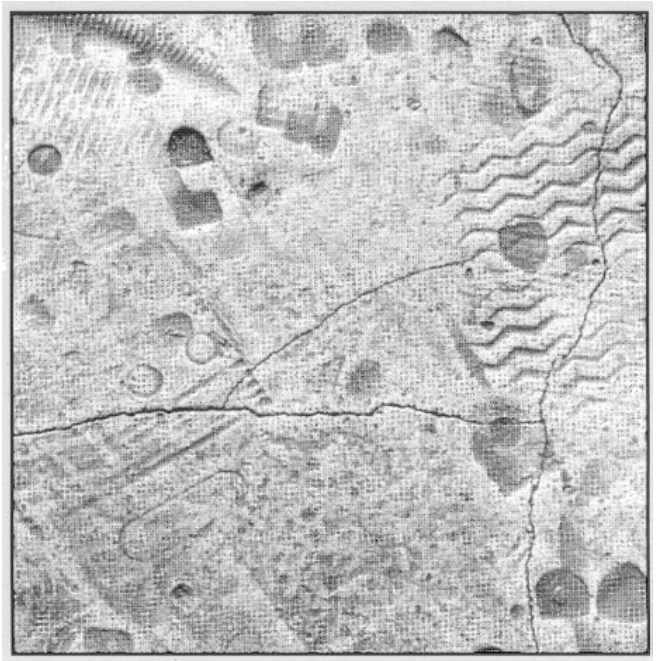
Dust
UNITED KINGDOM ReR MEGACORP CCTD2 CD (2002)

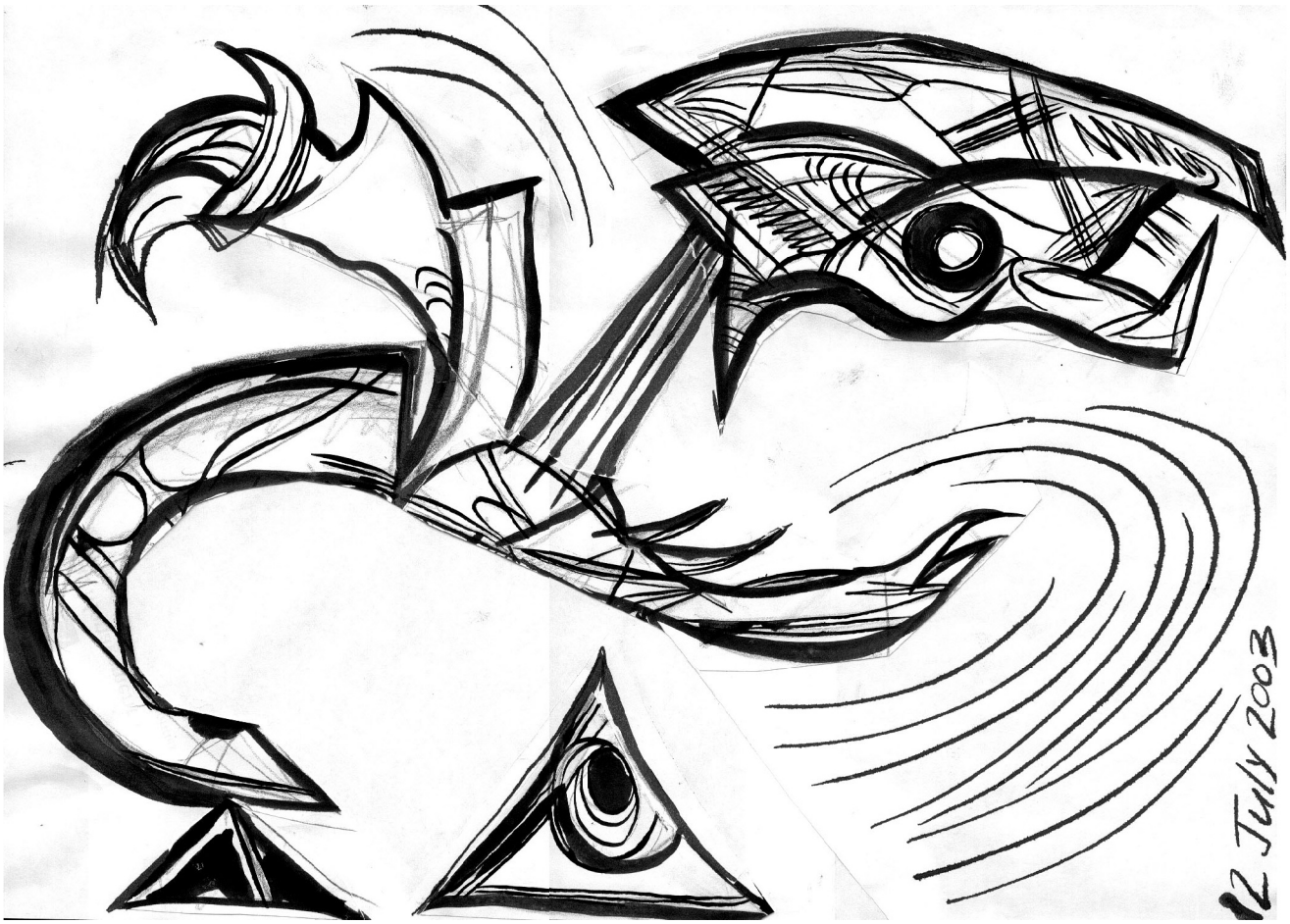
Not without interest, but mostly a sluggish, torpid noise from this famous duo. Dimuzio I think is one of the better noiseicians at the 'arty' end of the scale, and his duo Quake with Chris Cutler is a matchless roaring din, to say nothing of his solo benchmark CD Headlock - both those still available at ReR I should think. The first thing to say is that the musicians' playing - or at least what I can still discern of it among the layers of treatments - seems to be of extremely high standard throughout. Secondly, Dust has overall sound and feeling that is very pleasing without a doubt, but it's still a murky, cloudy nebula which never quite resolves into anything very definite. This places it quite some way from the more assertive end of the noise spectrum, but the CD still generates a thick clay of sonic marmalade which is more than enough to spread on your morning toast and satisfy your cravings.

Of the two long suites, I prefer the first one 'Requiem' which was recorded live at a performance space in New Mexico in 2000, mainly because it's simpler and generates more tension. On it, Cutler plays electrified and amplified drums and weird objects, Dimuzio has his sampler in his hands and does a lot of real-time sampling, and both rejoice in much mutual processing of each other's activities, in the grand tradition of socialist noise bands such as Faust or This Heat. Plus it has some nifty lyrical subtitles for each segment, such as 'An un-natural wind blows in from the sea', which help orient any confused listeners. Their second long opus, 2002's 'Universal Decoding Machine' has the better name and its 13 segment subtitles refer obliquely to some form of computer capable of shredding the meaning of language. Fascinating idea. But sonically, it's massively over-processed! Both musicians are up to the same mutual interference malarkey as indicated above, but you get additional complications from E M Thomas (who recorded the whole mess with his binaural mics, wandering in the performance space like a mongoloid zombie) and from Bob Drake (who was adding simultaneous loudspeaker processing while tucked up in bed at a studio in France). Don't you just love remote-site sonic treatments? Such practices ought to be outlawed. As if the pudding weren't already over-egged, Dimuzio later added further overdubs and mixage at his studio in San Francisco. Frankly, the original thrust and power of their work has been sapped considerably by these excessive digital ruminations and reconsiderations! I'd be far happier just to listen to them play together in real time, blasting their live electronics and drumming into one basic cheap mic, and just let the rawness of their energy bleed across the stage in a big pool of thick green blood.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

79 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8JG
megacorp@dial.pipex.com
www.rermegacorp.com





JENNIFER HOR

Wolf Eyes

Slicer

USA HANSON RECORDS HN100 CD (REISSUED 2002)

Count 'em: 25 releases including this album on cassette in 2001, 21 releases including this album reissued on CD in 2002 - are Wolf Eyes the nearest US equivalent to Merzbow? Quantitatively, yes: qualitatively, we'll have to see (the trio only really got started in the mid to late 1990s); musically, perhaps but you wouldn't realise just from hearing Slicer that Wolf Eyes indeed are an experimental noise band for this album is a subdued and self-contained affair with quite a lot of silence throughout and only the last track (all tracks being unnamed) gives any indication of the band's noise tendencies. Track 1 in fact has no instruments at all, just a man speaking with his speech chopped up into bits that seem to loop over and over again giving the effect of stuttering. Next up is a collage featuring a crackling beat, fuzz, cranking noises and a horn in the background. Track 3 integrates silence and sound in a steady stop/start way before it turns into a machine-funk rhythm. Tracks 4 and 5 are the longest pieces and in my view the best: these are extended explorations in sound and sound structural elements (like repetition, silence and the use of pacing) and are also atmospheric. Although Track 4 has a relentless machine rhythm with quite eerie, piercing tones overhead, it is pipped in the sinister stakes by Track 5 which features crackling sounds that appear to bleed and ghostly background noises that become more obvious about the 6th or 7th minute; late in the track we also get some nice blowy blizzard noises and some screams that echo overhead - ooh, very scary! Track 6 presents an interesting contrast between an ongoing background murkiness and an upfront series of tones and noises. More conventionally noisy, at least where listener discomfort is an important criterion, is Track 7 which still features a lot of silence but your ears will continue to reverberate with piercingly high tones long after this cd has finished. I understand that Slicer isn't a typical Wolf Eyes recording (I haven't heard anything else of theirs but apparently they're very energetic and their gigs are something to behold - one gig apparently set off the fire alarm so the trio continued their music in time to the alarm) but for that reason it's an interesting introduction to the band with a varied repertoire of sounds within self-imposed limitations, all created with mostly self-made electronic equipment and devices and very lo-fi techniques. Even if we can't keep up with the Merzbow-like output, we can certainly keep a watch on this band.

www.hansonrecords.com

Various Artists

MEGO Presents Playback Device Confusion Volume One featuring Aleph Empire

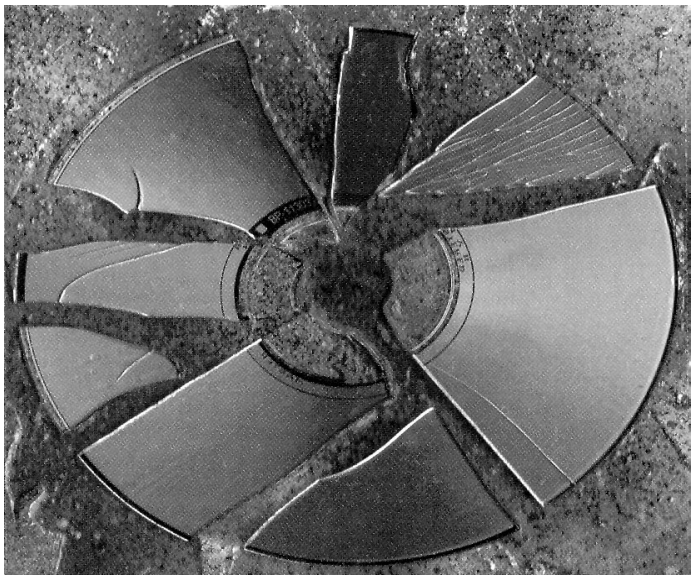
AUSTRIA MEGO 061 CD (2002)

Yuk - not to my taste! 'Live decks at Rhiz in Vienna' yielded this 21 minute slice of very extreme and repellent club and dance music, belted out non-stop express-train style, with some kind of arty twist to it - loud, 300mph beats, continual cut-ups, noise, shouting and horrible electronic manglings. Hear it all - sardonic laughter from arrogant young men! Sampled voices braying FUCK YOU! Dalek voices screeching DESTROY! Much wallowing in death and degradation! Messages of pain and killing! An offensive song about Auschwitz at the end! It's guaranteed to piss off just about everyone, except for that segment of populace who find this sort of thing invigorating and regard everything in life as one big joke anyway. Even though there are traces of Masonna and Merzbow (sampled, or soundalikes) for about 10 seconds here and there, I'd still warn fans of Japanese noise to give this a wide berth. Aleph Empire is the star, but also featured are Tiefpunk Crew, Schimpfluch-Gruppe International (described by Richard Rupenus as the Swiss equivalents of Vic and Bob), Fear Of God, Good Looking Communists, K2, Raionbashi and many more...plus extra featured goons who probably contributed samples to this jammed-up mess, without even knowing it. Of such stuff are legends made in Vienna, I guess. Probably appears way better under the right circumstances - total darkness, sweaty bodies, cheap beer...I'm totally out of my depth with this one...let me know if you fare any better. Even the package is attention-seeking - a shaped CD for fuck's sake! Y'know some of these Mego jokes get stale very quickly...

ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.mego.at

ANNIHILATE!!



The New Blockaders

GeSaMtNiChTsWeRk: 20th Antiversary Antiology 1982-2002

UNITED KINGDOM HYPNAGOGIA TNB20 4 x CD (2003)

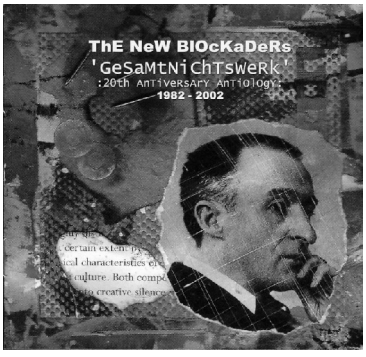
The New Blockaders are a brutal industrial anti-art noise group that started in 1982, and are about to become extinct at time of writing. Not that you'd know it, because currently I can't move in my flat without tripping over new product from them. 20 years old in 2002, they're currently working through a publicity programme to celebrate this with help of Hypnagogia label, who issued this retrospective four CD set that gathers highlights from their notorious noise career, and a 20th anniversary live set also. The 4-CD set existed as a special limited edition of 50 copies, which apparently sold out on pre-orders alone and is now deleted; the copy I have in my hands is the 'standard' edition. A tribute double CD will also emerge - material of TNB reworked by other artists. Then there's their final ever performance at the Red Rose club in London in November 2003, which I was not able to attend. I don't understand why I have been pulled into the whirlpool of it all as I never even heard this stuff until last issue.

The basic 'deal' that TNB propose for mankind is simple: total annihilation of everything. Stating up front their destructive intentions, TNB confront us with the image of a shattered CD on the front cover. Clearly they're aiming for the most nihilistic statement possible, yet somehow even this doesn't seem to quite reach far enough. For a gesture of defilement or destruction to work, the object ought to be something we all care about enough not to see it defiled or destroyed. How many of us feel that way about compact discs? Music, yes - but CDs are such commonplace, tedious little objects, things you put in your computer, given away on front of magazines, seen discarded everywhere. Let alone the number of CDs that get sent to this magazine...frankly, the more of these irritating gewgaws I see smashed up the better! Still, as a symbolic gesture this image is not without a certain iconic potency. Another interesting side to TNB is their relatively low profile and deliberate effacement of their own 'image', not unlike that of other anti-bands such as Faust or The Residents in the 1970s. Everyone 'knows' that TNB are Richard Rupenus and his brother Philip, but nobody knows much about them as people; they don't give interviews; I haven't sought out any contemporary fanzine accounts of their work, but it seems TNB have had considerable influence in this sphere, and have built up a respectable fanbase that regards them as no less important than Merzbow.

It's not hard to see why - this set is a real war-horse. First CD has the earliest material, featuring 1982's 'Changez Les Blockeurs' (originally issued as an LP) in its entirety. At first listen, I absolutely loathed this detestable formless piece of garbage, but - much to my own surprise - I have found it easier to digest on second and third spins. Now, I'm even looking forward to experiencing it again! It comprises clanking chains and scraping furniture or other big objects in the background; a day spent in your local garage in the company of two mechanical bears would provide much the same effect. Interestingly, it seems to be all-acoustic in approach - banging pieces of metal or whatever, but with no discernible electronics or amplification. Even the movements of the performers are (just about) audible, as they shuffle around the space selecting which object to assail next. It's a fine collection of inert and meaningless noises, no notes, no rhythm, no tunes...just a pile of horrible disconnected rubble. Gradually some hammering sounds enter the arena, a pre-industrial harbinger of the later more brutal approach to come. So, 1982 sees a truly ghastly start to the project...

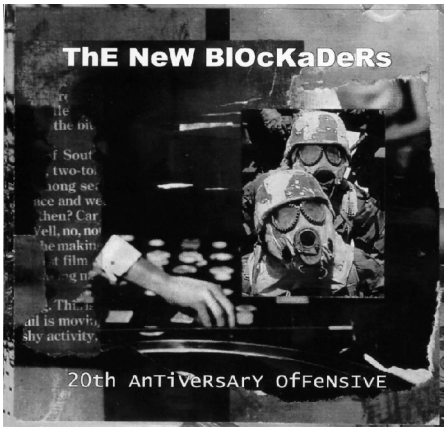
'Reductio ad Adsurdum' is also from 1982 but contains some 2002 revisions or additions to the original, and is assisted by Anomali. Now we find some electronic methods creeping in, but they aren't very powerful - perhaps it's just a battery torch wired up to a sardine can. A two part 'work' over 26 minutes, this starts off with uncouth rumbling then launches into squeely feedback and crackling white noise. We're still some way from the full caterwauling effect that would characterise their kingdom, but already this is growing more aggressive. It rumbles, growls and fizzes in a tasty, totally non-digital fashion. Later, buzz-saw styled whines come in; soon to be joined by oil-drum percussion. The masked tough guys are getting into some serious electronic punch-throwing. The claustrophobic feeling of the early work is already starting to open out - slightly. But it can also be irritating, merely because it's so fragmented - especially at the start, when they're not quite warmed up and the noises almost have to be coughed up out of their racking lungs. An image springs to mind of an angry wasp trapped in a jar, bumping his head against the obstacle. Where will he fly next?

Into the live performance arena, that's where. Second CD has four such performances - all recorded at Morden Tower in Newcastle, a venue whose very name seems to suggest a black, medieval torture chamber. Most apt for this diabolical racket - I don't know how two grown men could appear in public and get away with such atrocities. First abomination is from 1983, and it's a clean white-noise onslaught of harshness. Squeeling feedback, hammering, buffeting blows, metal grinding. Only one year on and the 'band' have figured out how to get straight to the point - this is the sound of some inanimate object taking carloads of abuse and screaming back protest in its metallic voice. Grrrreat! Second cut - later that same year. The feedback now sings mournfully to announce that day's torture session, after which the battle of the power-mowers commences. Realised with help of Sir Ashleigh Grove; a splendid on-stage battle of thuggish dimensions ensues. The feedback ringtones moderate the overall clankering din. Third track from 1984 shows they're on the way to cracking the formula for total success - this one comes roaring in like a freight train. They bring in a juggernaught of dense



feedback, whose power they continually rein in and make it perform like a captive elephant. They're sure getting to grips with their chosen bete noire, and teasing the audience with the vaguely sexy potential of it. Wailing squeals almost generate a mini-symphony in varied pitches, while the noisier deep-noted elements amount to a motorway pile-up. January 1984 sees them at most chaotic.

Final live cut is from 1994 and with Ferial Confine. In a scant ten years TNB show they have become experts at performing their brand of aural torment, as professional and merciless as covert CIA agents. Masked and hooded (I hope), they experiment on your body like a swarm of kindergarten kids invades a playground. Oddly, this is much less wild and naive than the first disc, and the powerful effects are clearly being kept under tight control; but still a seething cauldron of evil brew results.



Leafing through the enclosed booklet at this point, we can glean what few statements the TNB project have let fall and are prepared to share with us - their original 1982 manifesto is printed here, along with slogans proclaiming the value of their nihilistic approach ('Even Anti-Art is Art, that is why we reject it'), a firm conviction in the power of nothingness, and a spirited call to arms to deliver ourselves from the shackles of the past, by smashing everything. But even the smashing itself, though delivered with contempt - 'we have disrespectfully shattered [history] into four disparate pieces' - is intended to clear the ground for something better: 'we will invent new eyes, new histories, new systems, new languages...' you wonder just how nihilistic these guys can be, when they're so hell-bent on creating so many new things. Their words even become quite poetic, in an old-fashioned surrealist way - 'Typewriters will become pianos...with which we shall compose anti-symphonies!' Let's face it, both the physical objects in that sentence belong to 1920s Paris, not 21st century Britain. Naturally, I support the spirit whole-heartedly. Everything they say is backed up by the chaotic images - insane collages, imagery obliterated with paint splatters; printed sheet music, defaced, torn and degraded; and curious old photograph portraits, of whom I know not - perhaps their heroes from worlds of dada, music and philosophy (even a text from Heidegger is invoked on one page). Which ever way you cut it, only intelligent middle-class art students could have devised such a thought-through package of ideas as this.

Back to the music...and here's CD 3, from their 'mature' mid-period. The famous 'Simphonie in X Major' uses a sarcastic Dadaist title to conceal an LP of sheer genius filth-noise concoctions from 1989. The early naive and untutored approach, with its extremely limited range, has given way to a full panoply of wild sounds: an elephant groaning, junkyard percussion, racing cars and industrial power tools, all providing a sense of unstoppable forward motion. There's real deliberation in the playing now; and maybe even some studio edits, though I'd hesitate to say for certain. With assistance from Paul Coates. Without a doubt the best work in this collection, the jewel in their crown, this Simphonie is a continual charge forward into the very maw of death.

1991's 'Simphonie in O Minor' is an entirely different approach - a near-silent track for 15 minutes, seeping out a heavily muffled sound as of amps warming up or 10th generation tape hiss. You need to let this escape through your speakers to get the full effect. It's no less menacing than the out-and-out noisefest cuts. Then in 1993, TNB recorded 'Die Stunde X', a further experiment into the liberating potentials of feedback and harsh grinding; and if you've made it this far, O brave listener, you'll find you're so familiar with this stuff, you can almost whistle along to what they're doing.

Fourth CD is a 'celebration' of their 20 year career, with new recordings realised in 2002. 'Crincum-Crancum' is, relatively speaking, a near-musical concoction created (I guess, wildly) by switching between tracks at the mixing desk - we jump from whirrs to banging to feedback, and more besides, the elements almost conspiring to build a strange mixed chord shape (although no Rosedale chord organ from Woolworths could perform like this!) Perhaps 20 years hath mellowed the saturnine Rupenus psyche and dulled their appetite for relentless noise; this is less urgent, and there's almost an air of resigned weariness to this 2002 work. That said, it's no less bilious; the reservoir of hatred still fuels the evil intent. 'Meta-Klamauk' seems to return us to that garage of doom featured on 'Changez Les Blockeurs', only by now the mechanics have installed a noisy fan-heater device, and they're getting a lot more work done. Again, far more textures than we find in the early one-dimensional works. The third track has a near-nonsense title which I think translates as 'Why did the Blockaders stop?'; it's an attempt to recreate in sound a visit to the dentist. There's automatic drills, suction tools, water gurgling and an unpleasant image of open mouths. There's quite a lot of broken glass which needs sweeping up also. A nasty and painful 12 minutes, realised with help of Anomali; just seething with an understated violence. 'Null Bei Ohr', 20 minutes of total silence, closes the CD and ends this compilation.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

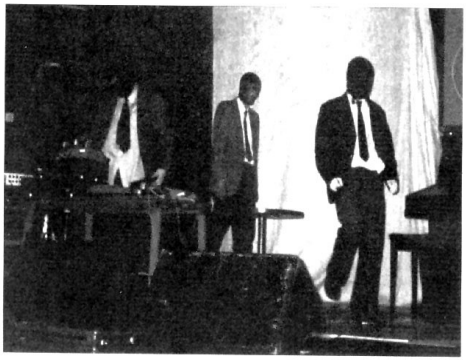
www.hypnagogia.org.uk

The New Blockaders

20th Antiversary Offensive

UNITED KINGDOM HYPNAGOGIA GIA01 CD (2003)

The live CD comes from the Termite Club on 06 June 2003, that infamous Leeds venue which I have never visited yet has been home to some of the most significant marginal free jazz / experimental performance and noise events over many years. According to photos inserted, there were three of The New Blockaders - Richard Rupenus and brother Phil, and a third ruffian (quite possibly Anomali). The image they present is great fun, black suits, white shirts and dark ties, and with full face masks - one of which is concealed by a big X. I guess they're trying to look like urban terrorists of noise, perhaps a kind of north-of-England version of Urban Sax. But their stage show is not a terribly active one - it's all sit down and make table-top noise. The assault starts off unassumingly enough, with the poised amplifiers humming ominously, as if in dread of the punishment they are about to receive. Thereafter it's 37 minutes of insufferable blasts of continual industrial howl, tempered with loud feedback and barely-controlled humming, and the vile, painful squealing that results from circuits being tortured mercilessly. This might be followed by seconds of the trademark 'big tornado' roaring, to be replaced just as abruptly by further circuit-fiddling that produces a white noise as inert as interference on a radio. Then, there's a clunky din that resembles arrhythmic thumping on the side of a plastic dustbin. Yes, it's a rocky ride for any listener - because (a) sound sources are so incredibly repellent, ugly and shapeless, and (b) dynamics of performance are so very disjunctive. No sooner are you poised to set back and attempt to enjoy the droning noise effects than they drop away, only to be replaced by something equally indigestible. When three or more of these ghastly effects are combined, the unlistenability factor goes through the ceiling. In short, TNB are deliberately making it as difficult as humanly possible for an audience to even tolerate (let alone enjoy) their hideous noise, and in one of their final performances remain as defiant as ever in their total rejection of everything.



ED PINSENT 10-2003

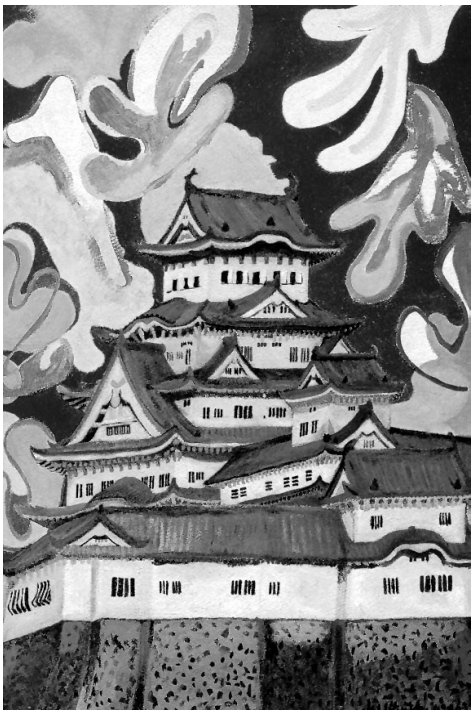
www.hypnagogia.org.uk

MUSIC FROM JAPAN

TICKLED BY OBVIOUS RESOUNDING CRAB-CLAWS, THE MYTHICAL STAIN REMAINS IN YOUR TOP DRAWER OBLIVIOUS TO TRICKERY BY FAKE MAGICIANS

Taku Sugimoto / Annette Krebs

Eine gitarre ist eine gitarre ist keine gitarre ist eine gitarre
ITALY ROSSBIN RS005 CD (2002)



A couple of Sugimoto items neglected for some time now. Eine Gitarre... is on the Italian Rossbin label and has been in the Projector box for many months - the recordings are now some two years old, from June and November 2001. No wonder I didn't rush to review this one though, because truth be told it isn't particularly exciting. Three shortish tracks of Taku joined by Annette Krebs; she plays an amplified acoustic, he plays electric guitar and six-string bass guitar, and they did it together at Off Site in Tokyo and then again at a festival in Darmstadt. Despite some occasional excitement and some undeniably unusual sounds emerging from what must be extremely unconventional guitar techniques, there are only a very few moments where everything gels and the players actually start getting somewhere. In between are some very long passages where each musician sounds uncertain of the other, and doesn't know where to go next, or how to arrive at a position of mutual trust. As a result, this is about one of the most disjointed records Taku has been involved with; statements are started, but rarely concluded, and maps are drawn, but travels are never made. Normally, the yawning gaps and general disjunctiveness we associate with this singular player come across as mysterious, elliptical and profound; but this time it simply seems inconclusive. Rather unsatisfying on the whole.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Via Gozzano 1, 10098 Rivoil (TO), Italy
rossbin@libero.it

Otomo / Rowe / Sugimoto

Ajar
UNITED KINGDOM ALCOHOL ALORS1CD CD (2002)

Ajar is a studio recording, and at present time I regard as far more successful than the above. Taku, joined by Otomo Yoshihide and Keith Rowe, got together to make this all-guitar record presumably around time of their excellent gig together at The Spitz in London on 13 October 1999. Ed Baxter, gig co-ordinator, set up the recording session with Xentos Jones producing. Hidden inside the sleeve (incidentally a rather weak design) is a card with intriguing photographs of the artistes - Otomo lying on a wheeled instrument case like a coiled animal with a sublime expression on his face, Taku fast asleep in a grimy dressing room space (still wearing his 'trademark' hat which I suppose has since been ditched), and Keith Rowe's hand, manipulating his table-top guitar like a scientist, under an anglepoise lamp. On the reverse of the card, Rowe playfully puts a metal spring on his nose, while Taku looks like a forgotten Beat poet from the 1950s in shades, beard and black garb, smoking a large cigarette in the open air, a huge tree trunk behind him. These pictures speak volumes about the creators somehow - not that they're going out of their way to create an interesting visual experience, but they make you want to know more about these three weirdos in a way that most 'cool' CD packaging simply fails to do. The music is one of the best things you will have heard from these three, singly or collectively. It comes from a time when Otomo was still reasonably besotted with Taku's work, and would have signed away his soul for any chance to play with the man. Keith Rowe was relatively fresh to this scene too; since 1999, of course, he's made several collaborations and released records of them. Although second track 'The Room' is comparatively unfocussed, the long track 'The Street' is a totally successful example of group improvisation, extremely well recorded, very enjoyable, and one that will stand several repeated playings. Aspects of guitar playing rarely thought to be desirable in recorded music - amplifier hum, crackling leads, strings creaking - are exploited and turned into pure music. The players seem to enter a trance, never disturbing the slowly-moving Catherine Wheel of concentrated energy that stands inside their sacred circle. Although on the surface your ears may lead you to believe they appear not to be doing very much, in fact there is a deliberation and intensity to their actions that makes this such a strong, effective statement. Seek ye this out while ye may.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

PO Box 556, London SE5 0RL, UK

Brett Larner / Burkhard Stangl / Taku Sugimoto

Compositions for Guitars
FRANCE A BRUIT SECRET 103 CD (2003)

That was 1999, but this is now. For a more representative sample - maybe - of what Taku's about these days, tune in to the latest from A Bruit Secret compilation, which is a pretty challenging set of what are charmingly

described as 'guitar compositions'. To say that this CD re-defines the notion of playing the guitar (yet again) is an understatement; it's a total deconstruction of virtually anything traditional in the history of guitar work, and that includes such far-out players as Derek Bailey and Hans Reichel, who were once regarded by many as heretics. Well, they wind up looking like classical traditionalists next to this! It might one day turn out to be as significant as Guitar Solos 2, the revolutionary guitar LP which Fred Frith compiled in the 1970s - although the main reason it was so revolutionary is because he somehow got major label Virgin Records to release it, whereas this record, good as it be, will probably remain confined to the experimental ghetto. Not all Japanese players; Taku has one 15 minute slot, braced either side by Canadian Brett Larner (with whom Taku played on the excellent Deluxe Nakamura CD, 2002) and European Burkard Stangl, key member of Viennese group Polwechsel. Taku's composition, simply called 'hum', is a piece for guitar amplifiers, and represents a valiant attempt to inscribe the noise of amplifier hum into the canon of composed music. No throwaway stunt this, he recorded it in Tokyo at a venue called Grapefruit Moon in 2002 with six other guitar luminaries - Rowe, Otomo, Stangl, plus Toshimaru Nakamura, Oren Ambarchi and Tetuzi Akiyama. The quite precise written instructions (reproduced here in booklet) to a certain extent follow traditions espoused by La Monte Young and carried on by many others, such as Cardew, Eno, Stockhausen - a highly efficient, simple and portable way to make music. An excellent work to be sure, but then what price the 1960s amplifier work of such rock musicians as Wayne Kramer in MC5, or even someone so obvious as Jimi Hendrix? Kramer spoke of playing the amplifier in live gigs, treating it like another instrument. And the stereo-panned amplifier humming sounds captured on Hendrix's studio records are not mere accidents; as Stefan Jaworzyn claims, he was an experimenter excited by the idea of the recording studio, and ventured into areas of sound which few have equalled, even to this day.

This should not detract from your enjoyment of this great guitar CD. The Brett Larner piece alone should be sufficient to winnow your brain cells into the condition of a large bag of porridge; it's an endurance test, a high-pitched unvarying droning-chirp which is 100 times worse than a plague of locusts, crickets and grasshoppers on the hottest of hot summer nights. Entitled 'm-7 / 21-1', it employs a small army of nearly two dozen guitarists, all equipped with steel-string acoustic weapons. The elaborate semi-mathematical structure for this perplexing composition is printed in the booklet, but it's pretty much unfathomable; impressively, there was no amplification, electronic effects or overdubbing used in its realisation. Yet there are hundreds of laptop players who would give their right hand to achieve a similar effect to Larner's - or at least they would if they weren't using it to masturbate.

Stangl's works here are never less than interesting, but even after second audition and having figured out the concept of the compositions, I'm starting to yawn somewhat. He plays with the idea of detuned guitars, and the way they behave as they get out of tune. On the first one he plays 3 steel string guitars and one Spanish guitar; one the third one, he employs Rita Emilia to detune the guitar while he's playing it. Since he follows some kind of pattern - playing a folk song, for example, and then copying some John Dowland lute riffs - the detuning process is clearly discernible, but in the final analysis it's not terribly exciting. Each piece ends up at the same terminus - slack bass strings slapping against the soundboard, like sad dying bullfrogs at a dry watering hole, or flaccid penises limply pulling out of a moist vagina. This probably says something quite profound about the entropic nature of the universe, but in my mind it also points to the increasingly dead-end nature of so much avant-garde music these days.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.abruitsecret.com

Tetuzi Akiyama

Résophonie

FRANCE A BRUIT SECRET 08 CD (2002)

To revive your confidence, you could turn to the newie from Tetuzi Akiyama, a single CD released on the French label that has done much to champion the new Japanese improv. Akiyama is one of the main 'movers and shakers' at Off Site, organising gigs there. Known as guitarist, but also turntabler and player of self-made instruments. He recorded these eight tracks in August 2002 at a studio called The Laboratory of Phonique Aim in Tokyo, using a guitar with a prepared resonator. I assume this handy gadget does evil things to the strings of a guitar, by way of vibrating or agitating them in weird ways that go totally against the grain. Certainly, although construction workers and carpenters are sagely nodding their heads in recognition at the sound of this CD, guitar tuners and workers at the Gibson factory are suffering heart failure. Every other track produces a strange vibrating harshness, like a buzzsaw; or to be more precise, a legion of little buzzsaws, flying rotating discs no bigger than a small coin, which spin through the air with their cruel, sharp teeth and proceed to lacerate your brain. It's a pretty profound experience - bend an ear to a few minutes of the long tracks like this and you're soon lost in unfathomable depths of strange sound. Yet it's so clean and precise; many players who attempt this sort of vibrator-thing by whatever means can end up producing a cloud of harmonics, from which the next stop is ambient grey mushiness and vague nonsense. But Akiyama's sounds ring true with the accuracy of a olden-time woodcutter who can slice the bough off a willow tree with one swing of his mighty blade. This is particularly true of the long track 'Léthargie', which after 16 minutes induces the exact opposite of lethargy with its hideous, bone-rattling tones - indeed it shakes the flesh of all biological entities in the area. For example, 45 snails in back garden were set to dancing by the noise, when played loud. It's a long sinuous trawl through clean, razor-sharp and piercing sound with an underlying abrasive counterpoint. Very taxing on the ear drums but the tone is very beautiful; if a sound could carve a diamond, this track certainly would. Another very fine track with pure tones is the percussive-sounding 'bordure': this is a very metallic piece with an air of contemplative and almost spiritual serenity.

The transition from 'résurrection' (meditative but quite jerky) to the whirling cacophony of 'bourrage' (this is as close to noise as Akiyama gets but the tones are smooth and the sound is not aggressive) can be jarring. Some tracks are continuous while others incorporate a great deal of space. The seventh track 'dissociation' almost sings - imagine Diamanda Galas with a bad case of laryngitis trying to sing and you get the idea. The final piece 'primitif' is more recognisably guitarish in sound but the metal strings seem to be amplified and Akiyama appears to play it like a six-stringed shamisen (the shamisen is the Japanese equivalent of a lute but boxy in shape with a long skinny neck and having very few strings).

In between, Tetuzi also 'plays' the guitar with a slightly more conventional picking and fingering approach. Conventional? Any resemblance between this and, say, the music of Julian Bream is about as remote as Jupiter's Red Spot. Because the tracks are different and tend to emphasise particular sounds or tones and different approaches and treatments in playing the guitar, the album seems less unified than it actually is, though the tension between consecutive tracks serves to link them all. Overall, the recording is very refined and austere and some listeners may find it cold and remote. It's as though some of these Japanese players are determined to efface any connection between their work and the past history of recorded music, and reinvent everything from the ground up. Even the immediate avant garde comparisons - the free-form picking style of Derek Bailey, the loony Dachsophone scraping work of Hans Reichel - are virtually annihilated by Tetuzi's approach, which for the most part refuses any notion of conventional guitar language, and indeed insists that even the very syntax of musical language is broken down into constituent parts. It becomes nigh impossible to 'read' any coherent musical sentences into this highly disjointed playing style. Again, it's a radical attempt to reinvent guitar music conventions in a bold experiment that may yet have amazing consequences.

ED PINSENT + JENNIFER HOR 10-2003

m_henritzi@club-internet.fr
www.abruitsecret.com

Kuwayama-Kijima

01.05.10

USA ALLUVIAL RECORDINGS AL015 CD (2002)

This is the two-person team who play violin and cello in undeniably distinctive fashion. Last time we visited their world they were doing it within earshot of a motorway and allowing a wonderfully weird CD to result - half improv, half field recording. Here they're in the studio (or rather I should say The Warehouse), brilliantly recorded with natural echo so that the instruments shine like polished mirrors - with no less effective a collection of five pieces, all improvised we assume. These scheming homunculi attack their instruments with a vigour that borders on pathological hatred: energetic sawing motion produces tremendous effective harmonics leaping off the bridge and shimmering in the air like the Northern Lights; tiny fingers the size of a crab's claws create plucking motions so sharp they could break the neck of a Canadian Goose flying overhead; busy left-hand fingering motions running up and down full length of violin neck as though colony of ants had escaped and had to be wiped out, using only fingertips, in two minutes flat. In fine, crucial stuff; but a harsh dissonance also results, and the way it seeps off the record like so much ectoplasm may frighten those afraid of atonality, and the resulting depression, anxiety and mental stress that such discordance causes in the minds of many can only be attenuated by tranquillisers and other soft drugs.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

PO Box 583742, Minneapolis, MN 55459-3742, USA
alluvial@hotmail.com

MUKAI Chie / FUKUOKA Rinji

L'energie de l'existence

FRANCE TURTLES' DREAM / ABRUITSECRET TDCD-02 CD (2003)

Another cello record of quite a different stripe is presented by Chie Mukai and Rinji Fukuoka. This one is monstrously good! The opening alone will convince you, devastatingly, that it's good enough to be a 'lost' record from the ESP-Disk label, with its totally free drumming, sinister piano rattling and yawping female yowls; try and imagine a combination of Rashied Ali, Cecil Taylor and Patty Waters all dipping into the same fingerbowl at a magical jazz party of the gods. And that's only the opening five minutes. Thereafter majority of disc is filled with enchanting cello playing of Rinji supported by additional kokyu work from Chie, both artists effortlessly painting nocturnal scenes filled with twisted trees and horned moons and jagged, falling stars. Their strings scream to the skies. This effect is enhanced by unsettling studio echo throughout, adding that faint yellow pallor to the already-ghostly, minor-key, off-melodies. Uncanny? Positively supernatural, me dears. Chie Mukai (need I remind you) is something of a veteran in the Japan improv scene - mentor of the psychedelic folk collective Ché-SHIZU, whose 1993 CD Nazareth for PSF compiles some of their amazing live recordings (see issue 2). She studied with Takehisa Kosugi, founder of the Taj Mahal Travelllers, and she's also played with Masayoshi Urabe, Seicihi Yamamoto, Keiji Haino, Kengo Iuchi and other nudniks. Rinji Fukuoka's background is as guitarist in psych-noise combo Overhang Party, and here (alongside his startling piano and drums contributions) he plays his cello with a guitarist's attack - hammering-on, plucking and unleashing all manner of forbidden spirits though his unconventional clawings. Pretty essential purchase I'd say - if only the sleeve art were slightly better! The highly subdued imagery is by Okuno Kazuhiro, and started out with perfect Zen-influenced intentions - poetic imagery of boat in water, lone figure walking, garden and flowers - but meaning has got lost in murky overlays and poor printing. I mention this because overall effect is not only complete opposite of eye-catching, but might lead unwary purchaser to think it's a New Age CD, hence skip past it on the racks. That would be a grave mistake.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

m_henritzi@club-internet.fr
www.abruitsecret.com

Junko

Sleeping Beauty

FRANCE ELEVAGE DE POUSSIERE EPP09 LP VINYL LP (2003)

Junko's solo LP is reasonably grotesque - a vinyl pressing - side with white label features said Junko screaming quite hysterically for 20 minutes in a rather musical way, but with rather flat recording. Side with black label appears to be exact same screaming recordings, only now played backwards. That's pretty avant-garde. This inversion is neatly reflected by the sleeve art with negative image of Junko on back cover to match positive on front. The backwards version of the music emphasises the breathiness of her intensive performance, but since same limited frequencies occur on both, each side winds up no less monotonous than other. Not one to play too loud or neighbours might get wrong idea. Or would they? Actually this record seems largely unburdened by too much emotional commitment. It's a scream, but not one of pain. So what kind of emotion is it? Inside is a sleeve note by Michel Henritzi which goes to great lengths to persuade us of the cultural significance of records by screaming women, referring us to the historical works of Yoko Ono, Diamanda Galas and Linda (wife of Sonny) Sharrock. 'Junko made a poem out of the scream which gets the atom particles speed,' he assures us in poorly-translated essay, 'and its dread too that is grinding both the word and the moaning.' To demonstrate just how true that statement is, you need only spin this record on a daily basis and watch those atoms particles speed around the room. Junko is vocalist with infamous Japanese noise band Hijokaidan. This was recorded in France by Francois Dietz, and it's released on a label which translates roughly as 'Dust Breeders'.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

36 rue de pot-a-mousson, 57000 Metz, France
dustbreeders@libertysurf.fr

Haco + Sakamoto Hiromichi

Ash in the Rainbow

UNITED KINGDOM RER MEGACORP HACO3 CD (2002)

Ash in the Rainbow - more music by women, hurrah - it's our old friend Haco with yet another essential release. Not heard from since 2000's Happiness Proof, here she be with eleven tracks of absolutely transcendent beauty recorded from 1997 to 2002. Realised mostly with help of Sakamoto Hiromichi, who plays exotic instruments ranging from musical saw, music box, disk grinder, percussion and some beautiful cello - acting like Del Palmer to Haco's Kate Bush - plus Era Mari on percussion, including the backwards-taped vibraphone. Interestingly, this vocal record is a remake of Sakamoto's 1999 LP Zero Shiki; she asked his permission to rework it, through process of digital editing, and adding vocals and improvisation to it. Resultant arrangements are minimal to point of perfection; songs short, make their point with no wasted time. The sparing use of musical box (hear 'Sign of the Seahorse') evokes a strange nostalgic feeling, while the crisp cello sounds and musical saw recall an earlier project of Hiromichi's and a

personal favourite, the 1994 CD by offbeat and mysterious Japanese combo Cinorama (see issue 2, now online). Haco's project is virtually redefining the concept of a song - pulling it apart and reassembling all the elements like a cosmic jigsaw, according to her own very idiosyncratic methods. The dynamics and counterpoint rhythms completely sidestep all your expectations; you will never have heard such an off-centre approach to song construction, or its delivery. The lyrics are simply beautiful, songs whose starting points are often connected with nature and ecology imagery, such as 'Moonfish Dance' which sings the praises of 'Tsukiu, with golden scales, the ultimate moonfish.' From here each songs goes on to describe mystical experiences and life-changing revelations that are so personal, it's amazing she found a route to express them. Of course, the lyrics by themselves don't accomplish this - it's the total effect, when combined with these eccentric arrangements, that bring it all to life, and the fact that as performer Haco is able to completely transform her whole personality for a few moments, so that a new person inhabits the space of the song. As press release suggests, Laurie Anderson would sell her soul to make such a genuine statement! Every song here is packed with enough ideas to keep an average indie band busy for a whole three-album deal, but my personal favourites are the title track, and the closer 'Deep Sky'. With voice vocoder on full, she limns a crystalline sound-painting of the azure heavens accompanied by cello, pianica and music box; again, unleashing the poignant emotions most of us would prefer to keep buried deep inside. Tears of joy bound to follow. Wonderment! Do not hesitate to procure copy of this rare gem.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

79 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8JG
megacorp@dial.pipex.com
www.rermegacorp.com

Tujiko Noriko

Make Me Hard

AUSTRIA MEGO 062 CD (2002)

Younger than Haco, but ready to prove a contender is Osaka-based Tujiko, who also delivers a compelling and eccentric set of songs-and-electronica on this, her third release for Austrian Mego label. Her first was Shojo Toshi in 2001, followed by a 12". It's sung entirely in Japanese, and all titles are printed in Japanese also except for one ('Give Face'), so European listeners must switch on and hope for the best. You'll be glad you did - I started out confused, but ended up beguiled. First impression - very hard to get a purchase on the music. Pallid, slightly tuneless warbling vocals, floating over skittering electronics that sometimes sound as though the machine has fallen asleep and switched off midway. Very odd. Second impression - vocal is a boneless mass draped like a jellyfish over skeleton of pleasingly odd Powerbook sounds and a gentle drum machine. Yet even that skeleton of music is soft, like the exoskeleton of a rare Japanese crab. Swingbeat performed by aliens. Third impression - the tunes are collaged out of disparate sound events, which almost add up to a tune in places, but with lots of holes in the paper. Such a gentle approach. Washed-out TV images spring into mind of listener, a strange futuristic view. Fourth cut - and this one is an ethereal lullaby, with a lovely keening melody in the middle played on keyboard's 'French horn' setting, slightly wonky. Now CD begins to make sense and becomes strangely moving to boot. To sum up, terms 'eccentric' and 'offbeat' doesn't begin to describe the elliptical approach here. Noriko can't quite beat Haco, but this is still immensely worthwhile.

Package includes lots of lovely full-colour photos of Noriko posing next to cars, trucks, food, seashells, men eating, nude bodies. I think you get one 'insert' per song, with title and lyrics printed (in Japanese) on verso of image. Aided by friends Hironobu Sasaki who mixed the record, and guest rapper Moyuni Jumo on one track, plus extra guests on vocals, guitars and drums. Do check out.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.mego.at

Knead

Knead

JAPAN PSF RECORDS PSFD-128 CD (2002)

We can basically sum up this CD as Haino-meets-Ruins, nothing more and nothing less, with few surprises or major musical departures in this very long recording (75 minutes). Performing with Ruins seems to have had a disciplinary effect on Haino - true, he still screams as if being ripped open while alive and fully conscious but such occasions are (disappointingly) few and his work on guitar seems more firnly anchored to terra firma et cognita thanks to Ruins' solid support than it would have been if he'd gone solo or performed with another band (like Fushitsusha!), with more twiddling and less foot-pumping it seems to me. For their part Ruins benefit from Haino's theatricality and sense of drama: they don't careen at full speed from start to finish - no, they actually slow down, RIGHT down and they are actually quiet sometimes! they actually include pauses of silence! they don't keep jumping from one fast tempo to another! Perhaps for these reasons this Knead CD serves as a good introduction to Keiji Haino and Ruins for those who don't know these artists' work though the CD is very long and the last 30 minutes or so are not remarkable - even Haino's histrionics and Yoshida's yodelling fail to impress during this section. Normally people would be well advised not to try singing duets with Haino (they would be stuck in the shape of thin crepey pancakes on the walls and have to pried off with delicate surgical instruments if they did - such is the man's intensity) but here Yoshida not only manages to retain human shape but even makes himself heard over Haino's bouts of what sounds like straining to give birth to a litter of fully formed adult porcupines. It's a strange and not always coherent singing partnership of which I wish there was more of in this CD, at the expense of Haino's strumming which starts promisingly enough with early flashes of fire and fury but ends up being fairly pedestrian and at times stuck in the early 1970's, especially in the final track. The track titles are in Japanese and look quite long; they probably reflect Haino's thoughts at the time he named them. What the original Man in Black (whose Raybans probably can't be taken off his face without a plastic surgeon in attendance - here's one guy who actually needs to wear them as opposed to people who wear them because they think they'll look cool - no way Jose, they just look less ugly and less cool) thinks about when he names his recordings can only be wondered at - maybe something like: 'Knead, yeah, what a great name for a band!'

JENNIFER HOR

PSF Records, Teralda Bldg, 2F, 2-45-11, Matsubara, Setagaya-Ku,Tokyo 156, Japan

Keiji Haino

"C'est parfait" endoctriné tu tombes la tête la première

FRANCE TURTLES' DREAM / ABRUITSECRET TDCD-01CD (2002)

Keiji Haino - maybe it's about time Sound Proj revisited work of this man who used to be firm fixture of early issues. This is a joint release with Henritzi's label - of the enormous corpus of recordings Haino has made in a long career, this live solo piece must certainly rate as an essential document to possess - and to be possessed by. Keiji describes it with one of those long and layered titles of his (the title above still isn't the complete one), with quotation marks which throw you off balance. However, that's nothing compared to what the music will do to a man. Here the Man in Black forsakes his guitar to deliver a remarkable live recording, a vocal performance with only a rhythm / percussion machine to accompany him -

and what a performance he delivers! Haino belting out screamy and grunty noise at the top of his lungs, against the scattershot beats of a wayward expensive-sounding drum machine. So good is this device I thought he was actually playing the drums, something the man is (very) capable of doing, as evidenced by start of his set at Le Weekend in Stirling in May 2003. On other recordings, Haino has tended to grunt and strain as if engaged in Sisyphean tasks like birthing live adult porcupines, but here from start to finish, the rhythm / percussion machine being used sparingly and spasmodically, Haino's sometimes shrill and sometimes deep voice calls forth and describes an entire self-contained universe, the structure and message of which even he may be only dimly aware.

This is a universe at once very close and intimate (uncomfortably so), highly refined and minimalist, violent and dynamic, disciplined, spacious, inclusive and austere. At about the 20th minute there is a short burst of percussive music, quivering with a rapid beat and flailing cymbal noises, yet steady and stately all the same, giving way to Haino's voice engaging in a repeated series of indecipherable utterances ending in loud sustained yowls. There are passages where Haino appears to be performing an esoteric ritual over and over with what could be tape loops of his vocalisations. Possibly use of digital delay machine here - and these loops form extra rhythms on top of which he can provide further gruntings. After the 42nd minute, there is brief silence, then the climax is upon us: Haino lets fly a series of screams and inhuman yelps, each more terrible than the last - is this the ultimate ritual, one of human sacrifice? Certainly our man screeches as if he were truly being torn apart by frenzied worshippers with their bare hands in the manner of maenads of ancient Greek myth (except maenads ripped other humans apart - here, a god or a divinely appointed prophet is being ripped apart). At this point the message and structure of Haino's universe is revealed and the recording ends as abruptly as it began.

Normally this side of Haino tends to divide audiences, but this release is a grower; he has rarely sounded so urgent or so distressed, gasping for breath as though his very life depended on vomiting out the next phrase of untranslatable darkness. Not merely haunted or troubled, this time Haino is caught in the relentless grip of some extremely nasty forces which are a clear and present danger. Further, despite extreme simplicity of means used to create it, 'C'est Parfait' has a structural complexity and vigorous dynamism that warrant several further investigations. 'First and foremost I am a singer', says Haino, in sleeve note prepared by Jacques Debout, a French writer who goes on to muse how unfortunate it is that Haino's reputation as 'new' guitarist has tended to overshadow the importance of his vocal work. Worth reading this typically French overly-intellectual essay for a real hoot - where else will you find quotes from Disney's Snow White and a Johnny Cash lyric on the same page?

ED PINSENT 10-2003 + JENNIFER HOR

m_henritzi@club-internet.fr
www.abruitsecret.com

Kaneko Jutok / Kikukawa Takahisa

Wedged Night

USA SIWA 11 VINYL LP (2003)

Wedged Night LP - a fantastic record wrapped inside a sumptuous package sent to me by a friendly American fellow who runs Siwa Records, simply on the strength of me listing The Moody Blues LP last ish - which is about the best result I've had from invoking that band's name. This is a mystical guitar, voice and drum record made at a Tokyo studio in 2002, performed by Kenato Jutok and Kikukawa Takahisa. Play side one to freak out with a single long track, 'Kirin', which is ethereal guitar playing, moaning and drumming at its Warlockian finest; the magick music gathers in darkness and intensity as it proceeds along the path of destiny to astral geographies. On this cut, the duo aspire to be a one-man Gong. Inquisitive and meandering at first, the music grows more agitated, with feedback creeping into the caverns like strange miniature trains emerging from tiny papier-mache tunnels on the Hornby set of mystery. The guitar attacks, the drums remain relaxed and sloppy-disciplined in the most clumsy easi-fit way - until it becomes necessary to take it up a notch. Then a snare drum punches home urgent guitar phrases, the echoed voice moans in pain. The strumming becomes more frenetic, as though guitarist is smitten with epilepsy. Cosmic tortured evil cloud of music results. 'Their product raises the psychedelia from The Styx', claims sleeve note, and who dare disagree with that assertion?

On side two, 'The Wedge' starts off noisy and abrupt, but soon quietens down into the kind of ranting, urban Japanese folk music we associate with Kan Mikami and others of this ilk; a Spanish guitar strums, declamatory lyrics spew forth; incredibly engaging disconnected guitar playing tumbles out of fingers of Kaneko, so deliciously loose, yet it moves along like a battery-operated toy car trundling along the motorway of madness, his broken guitar phrases keeping on just the right side of cohesiveness. Highly original style and, outside of drug-influenced music such as the first Mad River LP, where will you find such perfectly disconnected mayhem? Then comes 'Buried Memories', a monumental guitar instrumental which the superficial listener will write off as a 'Keiji Haino soundalike', but it's a genuine original - a cosmic guitar workout, loud and lovely, but suffused with genuine pain which you need only scratch the surface to exhume; the music is a cathartic drawing-out of that pain, achieved with deliberation and with dignity. Gorgeous package for this US-released LP makes full use of overlays and screen-printing techniques; dark grey and black ink on a black card cover, with inserts on art paper with one torn edge, printed in like manner. The Fushitsusha aesthetic made flesh. Most desirable artefact. Most essential music. Procure.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.siwarecords.com

Guilty Connector und Tabata

Guilty Connector und Tabata

FRANCE EVEN STILTE RECORDS ES101 CD (2003)

My, I certainly had high hopes for this one - up and coming young Japanese noise-artist Guilty Connector, joining forces with underground veteran guitarist Tabata Mitsuru (Zeni Geva, Marble Sheep, Boredoms etc). It's by no means a bad thing, but not as earth-shattering as I'd hoped for, given the vague promise of psychedelic guitar-work, experiments with dub mixing effects, and pure noise; this should have been Quicksilver Messenger Service with Merzbow, mixed by Lee Perry. Instead, it's mostly aimless episodes of mildly irritating racket, paired against simplistic, looping guitar riffs, and noodling half-melodies tapped out on a Casio. The duo achieve a few reasonable moments when strong elements clash together, but the abiding feeling is one of formlessness. These are two guys with plenty of studio effects to play with, but not enough ideas. After six sluggish cuts, we eventually hit paydirt with 'Tempus est quaedam pars aeternitatis', which sustains a single psychedelic droning guitar long enough for Kohei Nakagawa to freak-out in mad ways with his UTSU electronics and effects. 'Toad Possession', which follows, also has the degree of unhinged power which I can, with some justification, demand of two such enlightened souls. Before purchase, ask yourself if you wish to live with an entire 40 minute CD just for sake of two strong tracks. Perhaps their next pairing will fare better. Here they just seem a bit uncertain of each other. Great sleeve art, though. Guilty Connector is interviewed this issue.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

77 rue de la monnaie, 59000 Lille, France
http://evenstitle.free.fr

classical composition. Two minutes of his piano-synclavier hell and you'll be turning to a late Frank Zappa CD in relief! No less annoying is Yasunao Tone's 'Two for a flute player', a pretentious combination of zen poetry (read aloud by an American translator), flute and theremin that's so self-importantly precious it'll have you climbing the walls. The rest of it is merely 'tasteful', as indicated afore - Atau Tanaka's electronic tones that sound like a game of ping-pong, Masahiro Miwa's very pleasant synth tunes with voices. The last three tracks are among the most turgid music I've endured - Kazuo Uehara's 'Musique Collage II', a twittering cocktail of voices and noises, Astro's 'Apastron', one of the most turgid drones ever released, and Tetsuo Furudate's 'Der Geist', with its vague, doomy ambient scapes.

Admittedly, the full playlist of what went down at the exhibition looks a lot more comprehensive and mouthwatering, and it also spanned no less than 5 decades of historical recordings. This collection, drawing on recordings from last ten years only, is no more than a taster of what actually went down. That said, I question the approach that divides the music into attractive, neat packages - resulting in a centre-spread diagram that looks more like the kind of thing you get at stockholders meetings, but turns out to be a 'timeframe' purporting to explain the development of Japanese music from improvisation and electronic music to laptop music, with nice neat lists which indicate where each player fits in. To be fair, these charts are only offered as a convenience, and the curators stress that 'many Japanese experimental artists refuse to paint themselves into an aesthetic corner'.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.23five.org

Various Artists

Ju-Jikan: Ten Hours of Sound from Japan

USA 23FIVE INCORPORATED 23F/SFM 901 CD (2002)

Ten Hours of Sound from Japan - fortunately not all ten hours on these two discs, but representation of extracts from larger museum project called Ju-Jikan at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2001. Before you start creaming your jeans in pursuit of a copy of this double CD, read caveats below. It's largely a pile of indigestible stodge, despite having numerous topnotch names included in the survey, many by musicians who I normally love. No denying it was compiled by people who know what they're doing - Atau Tanaka (who provides excellent essays in booklet), Ryoji Ikeda and Shunichiro Okada. A few tracks do stand out for me: Tamami Tono's 'Dinergy 2', which opens the entire set and bodes well with lovely resonating harmonies and soothing chords. Yuji Takahashi's complex 16-minute piece on disc 2, which combines koto with very good electronics and some breathy vocals in a dynamic 'story' piece that keeps you guessing. And (surprisingly) Kozo Inada's d[o] long piece, which seems to describe a very strange interior with a lot happening inside it. I'm surprised because Inada has often struck me as a third-division player, at best.

Perhaps it's the overall 'tastefulness' of it, and the pseudo-academic context which gets my goat, and lets the whole thing down. 23Five has turned in some fine harsh sound-art releases (see last ish for a couple) which makes this - and its sister release for Australian music - a tad disappointing. When music becomes institutionalised, it starts to die. Witness the start of that process right here. We have mostly pieces which may not in themselves be particularly good aesthetically, but are 'representative' of some aspect of Japan 'modern' scene. Frankly it's such an obvious selection I could throw up...just goes to show what happens when you let a committee choose what's good for you. This may be well and good for civilians and initiates to the world of Japan, but I know you Sound Proj readers (if you've followed me this far) deserve better than this; most of this stuff we all knew about years ago. Japan's minimal electronica is represented by Nerve Net Noise, with an admittedly quite nice 'clicking' piece; and Ryoji Ikeda, for all of 3 minutes, with his customary high range blips and tones. (He was one of the compilers, so modesty forfends). Japan's 'noise' scene is represented by - guess who - Merzbow and Masonna, at only 4 minutes and 1 minutes apiece respectively. Pain Jerk are here too, with a nice noisy cut called 'Acid Bath, Drip Bones', but again, a very short track - and in the context of the remaining yawners, their energy really loses a lot of its momentum. This radical music deserves better to be preserved in aspic, in a museum.

Inclusion of Ichiro Nodaira is trying to make some point about modern

JAPANESE ROCK CORNER by JENNIFER HOR

Musica Transonic

Hard Rock Transonic

FRANCE FRACTAL RECORDS FRACTAL 019 CD (REISSUED 2002)

One of many usually psychedelic avant-rock projects led by Nanjo Asahito, MT plumped for a straightforward, early 70's hard rock approach on this album which they recorded several (many?) years ago. Riffs not heard since the glory days of Deep Purple are the launch pad for Asahito, Kawabata the Acid Mothers Temple axeman and Ruins drummer Yoshida to exercise flying fingers and drumsticks at moderately fast speeds in controlled bursts of improv; Kawabata's guitar runs have a clean sound that highlights his technical skill though he's never allowed to engage in meandering solo guitar excursions that used to give 70's hard rock a bad name and Yoshida concentrates on providing solid and dynamic support throughout (but you can hear he's a good drummer as well he should be given that he's one half of Ruins). Overall MT pack a lot of taut and actually very disciplined music despite the flyaway guitar licks into eight tracks that initially seem typically adolescent male dumb (check out the plodding riffs on tracks 1 and 4 and the speed metal start of track 3) but which quickly open into vistas of technical virtuosity that move freely and at respectable thrash metal speeds within the limits set by Asahito. if you are not familiar with any of Asahito's projects or with MT, this CD serves as a good entree though it's perhaps not representative of what Asahito or MT usually do; certainly the photos of exhibitionist dolly-birds and the track titles (in a mixture of Latin, Greek and Cyrillic scripts) suggest you don't take this recording too seriously!

JENNIFER HOR

www.fractal-records.com

Ohkami No Jikan

Mort Nuit

FRANCE FRACTAL RECORDS FRACTAL 018 CD (2002)

A crash of drums and furious guitar gives way to a thuddingly slow and repetitive rhythm over which guitars scream and wail - this is our introduction to ONJ's first album Mort Nuit and as the title intimates, this is a solemn midnight affair, the atmosphere intense and heavy and full of black intent. The major piece 'Israel' is dominated by the dirge-like march of

drums and cymbals thumping like dead weights, guitars circling overhead like ravens and crows attending a funeral and Asahito intoning his lyrics in an emotionless nasal tone as he conducts the last rites. Since the track clunks along in this way for a full 30 minutes, it's a major endurance test for those prone to headaches but you'd be missing out on a fair amount of good music, dark and Gothic though it is; the sound is gritty, arrangements are minimal and Asahito's production gives them a spacious epic feel with lots of echo which intensifies the deep ominous mood.

The two short tracks that follow are utterly different: 'One' consists of a void punctured by short bursts of guitar / drums noise which collapse back into the silence that vomits them out while Asahito deadpans some neo-primitive utterances; 'Babel' is a break-out thrashing chaos, itself cut into three parts in different keys by brief pauses. Utterly mysterious and all quite impressive for a first album though of course Nanjo Asahito and his unnamed musicians have lengthy track records in other projects and bands, among them Fushitsusha, Toho Sara and those near-mythical psychedelic giants Les Rallizes Denudes. I understand the sound, direction and personnel of ONJ may change with each succeeding activity depending on the theme the group is following at the time and the only constant will be Asahito himself. Whatever this theme is, it makes for an interesting if unpredictable musical concept with a lot of promise (if sometimes heartbreak) - Asahito, we are expecting great things from ONJ in the future!

JENNIFER HOR

www.fractal-records.com

Les Rallizes Denudes

Le 12 Mars 1977 a Tachikawa

USA OKORA / OVER LEVEL CD LES RLE1 2 x CD (RELEASED 2003)

Said to be one of the ultimate Japanese psychedelic documents and though it was recorded over 25 years ago, still very much one of the last words in sonic storms of the distorted guitar feedback fuzz kind. The formula is simple enough: a primitive unvarying rhythm over which vocalist / lead guitarist Mizutani delivers his lyrics in a deliberately emotionless slacker tone while his fingers do the walking ... And very strange walks they take too - into deep pits of dark melancholy joined by bridges of searing fire straight from the funaces of Hades - and that's just the first track, folks, the 'most acoustic' and 'quietest' (ha!) number of the set. The boys start to mean business on Track 2 / Disc 1 - the formula is as before, the repetitive structure and deadpan vocals serving to launch Mizutani's stringed blast-offs into realms ruled by scouring blizzards of feedback. The massive volume levels thus engendered must have flattened many blessed punters into schnitzels at that Tachikawa gig in those pre-Merzbow days and the sheer aggression and hailstorm effect of Mizutani's playing would have ensured that very few people would have survived with minds intact from the scene of the world's biggest experiment in mass brain reconstruction surgery.

Track 3 / Disc 1 is perhaps the highlight of the recording: its relentless, oppressive rhythm is overlaid by a hellish ambience of screeching guitar washes and Mizutani's sinister singing made more so by the use of echo. Aaah, don't listen to this in the dark! Heavy clouds of threatening drone build up continuously only to dissipate in a rather disappointing anticlimax (maybe or maybe not intended) that is quickly cut to make way for the next track.

By now you know the plot though it's amazing how much Mizutani and Co can get out of a very elementary template: a bluesy mood (Track 4 / Disc 1), an introspective one (Track 1 / Disc 2), proto-punk (Track 2 /Disc 2) and something almost dumbfuck (Track 3 / Disc 2). Mizutani sings in Japanese so I have no idea what his lyrical concerns are; I do know that some of the original band members (this possibly includes Mizutani) had been involved in radical university student and left-wing politics and avantgarde art movements in Japan in the late 1960s and early 70s (those were the days) so perhaps the lyrics point in this direction. If RD's political orientation doesn't appeal to you much, the massive slabs of distorted and howling drone Mizutani wrenches from his instruments are sure to clobber you into a convert to the RD way of music. Unfortunately, all of RD's recordings are extremely rare and rather pricey and the double CD set copy I have is almost certain to have come from a bootleg recording judging from the crude jump from one track to another on Disc 1 so you'll have to take my words at face value: this is an essential Japanese psychedelic guitar document.

JENNIFER HOR

www.aquariusrecords.org
www.matadorrecords.com
www.synrecords.com

Acid Mothers Temple and the Melting Paraiso U.F.O

Electric Heavyland

CANADA ALIEN8 ALIENCD34 CD (2002)

For a collection of seemingly utopian post-hippie freaks, the AMT folks sure put out records at a rate comparable to that of a factory in China or Mexico near the US border whose workers slave for peanuts in ghastly sweatshop conditions churning out toys or sports shoes that we First World consumers have to pay through the nose for. Of the vast sea of AMT releases, Electric Heavyland is said to be one of the best; with no exotic instruments, special guests or hangers-on (at least none I can see or hear), this CD would be among the AMT core group's more generic - this must mean Kawabata and Co mean business here! - but having heard this album a few times now I still think there's plenty of room for improvement in the style AMT have developed and the areas they are travelling in.

All the distinctive characteristics of AMT are present: Kawabata's awesome guitar thunder drenched in all manner of special FX; spaced-out synthesiser notes sprinkled liberally over the proceedings; and most memorable of all, Cotton Casino's unnaturally high, Kate-Bush-as-a-real-wraith vocals, warbling away in a language understood only by those locked away in a closet for decades and driven permanently deranged by the severe isolation. The fact that Casino does nothing but warble throughout points up the problem with this recording: you start thinking hmm, the odd scream or two would be welcome, maybe even an occasional if unintelligible lyric. The same goes for the synth doodling - is that all there is to it? Seems everything is subordinate to Kawabata's axeman posturings - true, this being Electric Heavyland, the heavy metal aspect should be a dominant element which means lots of guitar licks flying through the AMT universe at supersonic speeds (at his age Kawabata still plays incredibly fast thrash music) but this being Electric Heavyland with a capital H the rhythm section should be beefed up into a mighty thundering monster in its own right particularly in the second track which features hellacious riffing and given the occasional drum break or two, not for too long of course but just to liven up proceedings. (If putting drums upfront in the mix was good for Led Zeppelin it should be good for AMT.) And though Kawabata's guitars are fuzzed up and overamped, they still need to sound dirtier and thicker - the sound on this CD is rather clean, too spacious and faraway and needs to come closer to the earth, specifically the gritty and thick muddy parts of it. As for the synth playing, it's mostly secondary to the guitarist's starring role (though on the third track the synth and guitars have about equal time together) and concentrates on adding the necessary spaced-out atmosphere but there's no reason why the synth can't come to the fore in its own right specialising in extreme alien noises and effects.

In addition to their musical roles, the AMT core group members have their 'images' to consider: for example, drummer Koizumi has adopted the demeanour and dress of a hermit-like monk which sits oddly with his musical role (a many-armed Indian godling might seem more appropriate). Kawabata the speed guru runs the AMT ship at breakneck speed - the entire CD is fast apart from a few slow moments at the beginning of two tracks - and this pace plus their output and touring schedules seem quite contrary to the original post-hippie (and, I assumed initially, egalitarian) ethos of the AMT project and more suited to the post-industrial global capitalist society with its hierarchy of First World managers and Third World workers.

JENNIFER HOR

www.alien8recordings.com
www.acidmothers.com

Insect's voice showing beautiful nature

Guilty Connector interview

by JENNIFER HOR

Kohei Nakagawa aka Guilty Connector first appeared on our radar screens a couple of issues back when I reviewed Different Water which he released on his label Utsu Tapes. His musical philosophy at the time was quite straightforward: brutality all the way through, this was apparent throughout that cd. He seemed to have been hell-bent on out-Merzbowing Merzbow and outdoing just about every other known noise authority. Since then, under the tutelage of Zeni Geva's Tabata, he has been refining his approach and together the two musicians released a self-titled CD on the French label Even Stilte. Given that Nakagawa started his music career in a Ramones tribute band while a teenager and he is still young (he's in his early twenties and is currently a university student - he also moved from Kyoto to Tokyo), he has certainly come a long way as can be seen below and no doubt with the number of collaborations he has done and plans to do (with New Zealand's Birchville Cat Motel among others), he is destined to continue a long and tangled musical path.

This interview was conducted via email in September 2003. One or two additional questions from EP.

JH What music or other influences inspired you to start Guilty Connector?

KN When I was [in] junior high school in Kyoto, I [was] into brutal music like HARDCORE PUNK, G[RI]NDCORE, or DEATH METAL, etc, etc. So I wanted to start extreme band, but my few friends didn't like that music so I started 'GxCx' by myself.

JH Why did you start Utsu Tapes?

KN Maybe 1998 or 1999. I just wanted to spread my own releases.

JH Are there influences from your life (like work or university studies, hobbies) that affect Guilty Connector? Or are Guilty Connector and work / studies separate?

KN Yes, of course. I take track title from whole of my life such as conversation with my friends, my study (I [am] studying Japanese folkrore).

JH Can you describe the equipment you use in the studio and on stage? What is UTSU electronics?

KN UTSU Electronics [consists] of some effect pedals made by me and my friend, and metal junk with contact microphone. I scratch it like guitar player ha ha ha.

JH Which countries is GC popular in? Where do Utsu Tapes recordings sell?

KN I don't know but I'm doing weird space psychedelic noise ambient band with ZENI GEVA's guitarlist TABATA named *GUILTY CONNECTOR und TABATA* and the 1st CD released from French label, EVEN STILTE. So maybe [I'm more popular in Europe than US] I guess. Utsu tapes stuff can buy at Japanese Record Store of course including huge mailorder site MSBR Records, GROUND FAULT RECORDINGS (USA), SELF ABUSE RECORDS (USA), ARTWARE (Germany), SLAUGHTER PRODUCTIONS (Italy), SLAP A HAM RECORDS (USA), AQUARIUS RECORDS (USA), etc, etc...

JH How did you contact Tabata? Are you planning to work with him again?

KN I'm fuckin' big fan of ZENI GEVA since high sachool. In 2000, I take part in same show with ZENI GEVA, as a member of US's BASTARD NOISE. And I came to TABATA's show again and again, someday, he said 'Hey why don't we hang out?' after his show and we [exchanged] phone number, then we hanging again and again and again. [We live] near each other so we always meet and get drunk, ha ha ha. Of course our 'GxCx und TABATA' active! 2nd CD will be released at Hoppy Kamiyama's GOD MOUNTAIN.

JH Tabata apparently introduced you to dub and psychedelic music. What elements of dub did you bring to the GC / Tabata recording? What did you do behind the mixing desk?

KN I often go to his house and we listening to many music. We don't use any dub method our recordings, we just fun to listen to music. At mixing desk, I just check PAN, and VOLUME, etc for our 1st CD. By the way, I did all mixing for TABATA's solo track contributed for EVEN STILTE compilation. It's fucking heavy and weird drone music.

JH Are you still interested in psychedelic music and stoner rock? Do you know Sunn 0)))?

KN Yes I like that music but I don't know Sunn 0))).

JH Would you say you had any influence on Tabata, Bastard Noise or other people you have worked with?

KN I love collaboration 'cause I can get awesome good influences the collaborators. They make what I do not think of. I and they influence mutually. So I like collaboration!

JH What other collaborations would you like to do? Are you or will you be working with Birchville Cat Motel or other NZ artist?

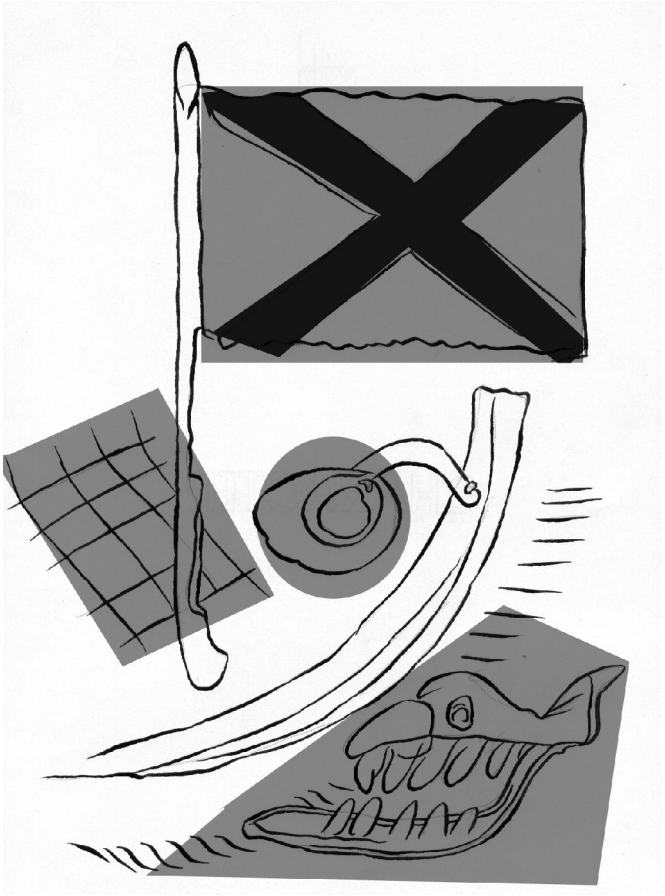
KN Yes, he e-mailed 'send some sound elements' so I sent it to him. I recorded drone ambient material recorded by Cup of water on Metal plate. now I'm working with KIYOSHI MIZUTANI. It consists of his Field Recording and GxCx's loud stuff!

JH What direction do you see Guilty Connector going in? What music inspires you now? (Ambient, punk, hardcore, metal, black metal, done, any other?)

KN I don't know GxCx's future even tomorrow! Ha ha ha. Recently, I'm into Hawaiian music, Reggae, and THE BEACH BOYS because it's hot!!! Ha ha ha, and brutal stuffs as usual.

JH Merzbow used to have porn and bondage imagery in his music, now he uses wildlife and nature imagery. What images if any do you like to use with your music? What images have you used in the past?

KN I often use 'BRUTALITY of MANKIND' image. For example, I will release my 2nd CD called *MOTHER'S BLOATED CORPSE* soon. 'Mother' means



'Our Mother Earth'. Human beings are too spoiled, including me. Definitely it's time of satiation, definitely. About the cover-art, it have two parts. One showing humans bullshit asshole acting on the earth. The other showing future of humans. They move to other planet, they can see 'MOTHER'S BLOATED CORPSE' from there.

But there is also raped by nuclear as well as 'MOTHER'. That is to say, I'm showing that foolish humans repeat same fuckin' brutal, bullshit, and foolish act again and again. It's a helpless future.

This CD beggins 'Rain' sound field recorded by me and the end (track 9-10) has 'beautiful insect's voice'. I'm showing 'Black Rain' that comes after nuclear attack. -Japan is only the country that experienced [nuclear] attack, you know. And insect's voice showing beautiful nature.

If the listners repeat this CD, they can imagine, it's repeat of 'from helpless day to wanderful future'. or 'wanderful days to helpless future'. It means, if they can get wonderful future on other planet they moved, they also raped there by their brutality again and again like our mother earth. But it's just my [delusion], ha ha ha.

JH What do you believe is the future of Japanese noise music? (More influences from other music genres? more melody?)

KN I don't care!! I just wanna create good music and hang out with good friends!!!

JH What other artists have appeared on Utsu Tapes? What do you like about their work?

KN Mainly I release GxCx stuff only 'cause I can't afford to release other artist. Recently I released BASTARD NOISE + GUILTY CONNECTOR *DECIMATION CYCLE* 7" EP. I was big [fan] of MAN IS THE [BASTARD] since high school and their BASTARD NOISE [is] also awesome. [It's fucking] completely compositioned great music. So I wanted to work with them and finally we released this stuff. It's fucking speedy and loud noise made by mail (not e-mail) collaboration.

JH Are you planning to visit USA or Europe soon? Are you planning to visit other countries like Australia?

KN Yes, of course I will come everywhere someone invite me!! By the way, I got offer from NORWAY's festival with SENSER BAND, MASONNA, GOVERNMENT ALPHA, and MERZBOW on this September but the organizer can't make money to invite, so it stopped, sadly.

For more information on Mother's Bloated Corpse, see http://www.geocities.co.jp/Hollywood-Kouen/4194/mother.html

WE ARE CURIOUS (FELLOWS)

⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙ SOUND ART FROM SWeDeN

By Ed Pinsent, 10-2003

SOME SMATTERINGS OF SWEDISH WEIRDNESS, noise, sound poetry and electronics from the Firework Edition label, and a new retrospective collection by Rune Lindblad, the father of Swedish electronic composition. Most of these records emanate from the Fylkingen / Firework Edition conglomerate. Fylkingen is the Stockholm-based society for new music and intermedia art, a home for brilliantly demented Swedes of all stripe, some of whom are represented below. The common linkage with much of this work is that it receives subsidies from the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs, and if the evidence below is anything to go by, the stodgy UK Arts Council (which would never dream of even assisting the UK equivalent of such work, let alone troubling themselves to find out that it even exists) has a lot of catching up to do! Firework Edition is a machination, a scheme if you will, dedicated to the preservation of perplexing concept and performance art, as rendered in sound mode. The antics of conceptualist, composer and performer Leif Elggren in particular can get right up the noses of those who find him pretentious, silly, irritating and pompous - and are prepared to believe the same of the other Swedish absurdists that buzz around his hive, most notably his sparring buddy C M Von Hausswolff. My excessive and far-flung appraisal of their Kingdoms of Elgaland double-CD last ish has, surprisingly, not netted me a single jot of abuse as yet. I don't know why so many intelligent people can't wait to get their knives out to punish the artists of the world (particularly when there are several more deserving candidates waiting in line to face those blades) - it's as though they're determined not to be fooled by anything or anybody which they suspect is taking the mick. True, healthy scepticism is a good thing for detecting bullshit - but I think you gotta approach Leif and his ilk with a sense of fun, suspend disbelief for a moment, or even simply give your brains a day off. So, welcome aboard, pick up your party hats and join in...

The Sons of God

The Sons of God Refurnish

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1038 CD (2002)

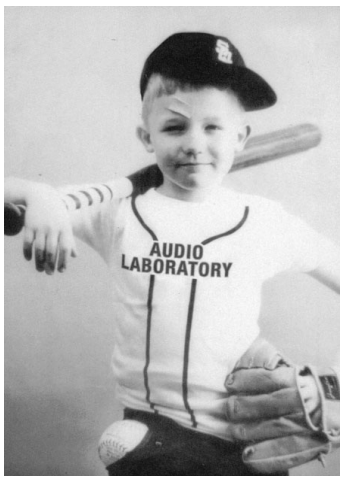
The batch here leads off with a singular long piece Refurnish by The Sons of God - which is Leif with Kent Tankred, who have performed many a strange 'action' together. Their long piece The Object, where they did nothing but bang against the side of a metal ship with hammers, still plagues my memory to this day - yet I've only played it about twice! On this one, the title Refurnish seems to summarise the totality of this absurd action - it's a documentary recording of them moving furniture around on stage. Or is it? Perhaps as with so much of this approach to art, the finished result (in this case the recording on the CD) is almost negligible, a pocket of peripheral information as residual to the main action as the fluff that accumulates in your trouser turnups. Or perhaps you had to be a witness to the action in the first place, observing in bemused fashion this strange behaviour by two grown men performed with an intensity and / or solemnity befitting the occasion that not even your local cinema commissionaire could manage. Which ever way you cut it, this is probably one of the more tolerable discs resulting from Leif's buffooning clownery (much as I loved his bed-leaping CD, I guess it doesn't really replay further listenings), and the scraping and clattering of those squeaky cupboards and doors gathers in intensity as you are drawn into this twilight world of futility. In addition, I find the ritualistic side of the performance - if any - does translate somehow into the sounds, adding gravitas and purpose to an experience which could be achieved under any other circumstances by simply hanging around a Pickfords warehouse for 75 minutes. But then, the average British workman never moved wardrobes with such determination as you find here! A good one. Use it to rearrange the furniture of your mind, or if that fails, then head out in the street and rearrange somebody's face. (NB - that kind of street violence is not acceptable in Sweden).

Leif Elggren

Extraction

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1039 CD (2002)

Extraction is another Leif-a-thon, but unlike the furniture escapade this monster doesn't purport to be a document of a live performance - rather, it's a sound art CD which allows the listener to take part in a sonic experiment at home. 'For best results, load this CD in your CD player, confirm that sound is coming out of the speakers, and then just leave the room,' suggests the creator with a twinkle in his glass eye. 'When you come back everything will be totally changed.' What in the name of the Swedish prime minister does that mean? Well, I have no reason to doubt his outlandish claim as yet, but I haven't quite managed to reach the very end of the work, as it's another one-track CD of such length that completion of it always appears impossible. Comprising mostly a very loud amplified hum, Extraction is occasionally overlaid with other electronic white noise or crackles and other events that redouble the intensity of the humming, in such ways as to alarm your elderly relatives living below. Eventually it settles down to a fairly soothing helicopter-like drone - one that can send sane men into an evil zombie-like trance. Apparently there's a human voice in here somewhere too, but it's totally off my radar. Since this powerful monotony is sustained for entire length of said CD, then clearly we're not far away from CM Von Hausswolff territory; every other release I've spun by that avant Swede is a 'hummer' with variations of some sort or another. Von H and Leif also share a common interest in communicating with the dead through sound, hence Leif's infamous 'talking with a dead queen' experiments. Extraction, for its part, purports to have been recorded in his mother's uterus, using very particular surrealist methods which Leif details here. Naturally, Extraction cannot possibly live up to any of these exaggerated claims made for it, whether you choose to suspend disbelief or not. You could however widen your interpretation of Leif's cryptic utterance, and start to look for something that's 'totally changed' wherever and whatever it may be. You see? Already you start to join in the fun, engage with the hidden mechanisms of even the most difficult and challenging art. Keep that party hat on, pilgrim...

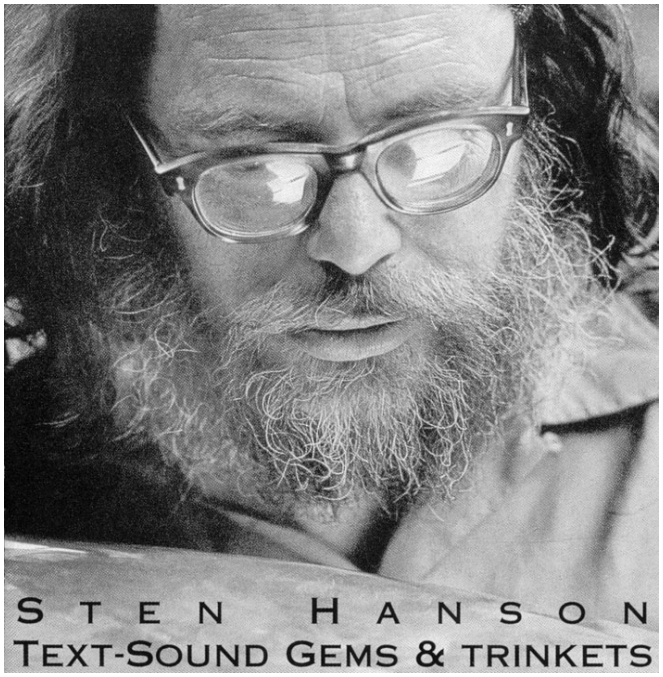


Audio Laboratory

From Silur To Devon, Carbon & Trias

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1040 CD (2003)

Audio Laboratory is more of an immediate attention-getter, and likely to win the favours of all you noise-hungry maniacs out there, roaring its way into your hearts as primo example of modern European small-group noise. Here be thunderous explosions, droning electronic wails, sampled radio voices, strange instruments, loud guitars, computers, distortion and phasing effects piled on like clotted cream on a Devonshire scone, all in the service of some decidedly strange ideas and a collective improvisational approach that



borders on mayhem. Amazingly, it takes only four Swedish nutcases to produce a racket as pleasingly dense, complicated and dynamic as this - whereas I have seen and heard elsewhere extremely large groups of players producing only one fraction of the sound, or the energy. The nutsoids to blame are Jean-Louis Huhta, Per Svennson, Ebbot Lundberg and Henrik Rylander. The first two deliver reliable electronic walls of experimental blasterage (Per plays the metal grinder with as much enthusiasm and resulting visual sparks as the Faust drummer); Rylander plays the Theremin and is in charge of the special effects tub, from which he ladles many a gobbet of phasing and flange; while Lundberg is more self-consciously 'wacky' and is responsible for the annoying vocal effects that do mar my enjoyment of this disc slightly - he has a rockist, bluesy wailing which seems out of place, but there isn't too much of it. Lundberg also plays Gameboy and Qcord on his silly 'When you get to Heaven' song, exhibiting the sort of inane, bombastic unfunniness in both music and lyric that doesn't always travel out of Europe too well. But these are minor quibbles when you're faced with the awesome glories of the first half of the disc, including some highly charged live performances from the Fylkingen and MS Stubnitz festivals, and the closing cut '26000 Years Old', with its cavernous choir of ancient cavemen wailing like neanderthal grizzly bears against a cacophonous barrier of kaleidoscopic electronic debris. For one of those 'everything AND the kitchen sink' styled combos, Audio Laboratory's sonic experiments have delivered pretty consistently successful results.

Sten Hanson

Text-Sound Gems & Trinkets

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1037 CD (2002)

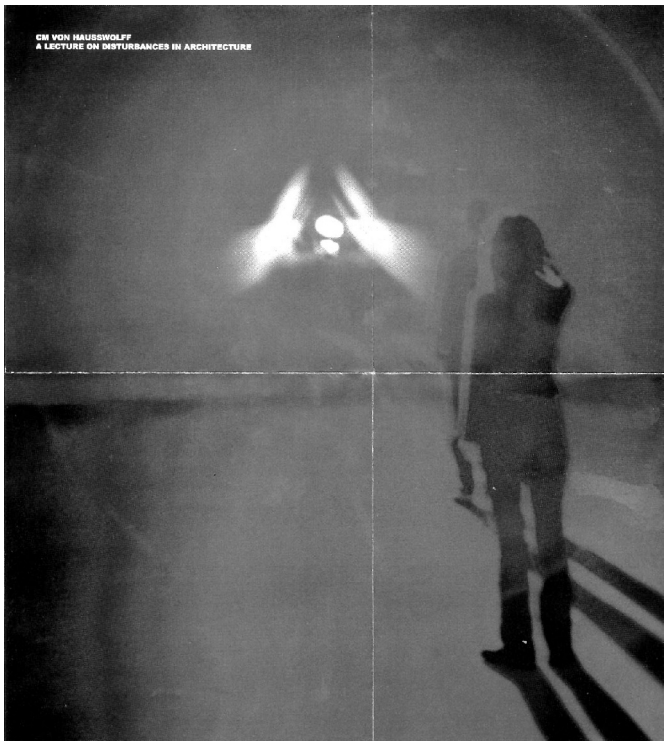
Sten Hanson's CD is an excellent collection of his sound poetry pieces, with not a weak track in 25 or a single dull moment out of 73 minutes. How many CDs can you say that about? Veteran Hanson first had work published in 1955 and has been performing his fabulous poetry since the early 1960s, and the earliest work on offer in this chronological survey dates from 1964. Naturally enough, by 1970 he began to be invited to submit works to Henri Chopin's OU magazine, and in 1973 they even collaborated together on 'Tete a Tete', with French loon Chopin providing his famous voice and mic technique, producing raw material which Hanson edited into a composition. (A mammoth boxed set of CDs collecting soundworks from OU was recently released by Alga Marghen, and if I had the courage I would try and scribble a word or two re that important release). While some of the sound poets went for purely abstract sound-constructions, Hanson is certainly interested in content, the words as well as the sounds - he sometimes chooses minimal texts, but ones laden with meaning, and with the use of devices like looping, overdubbing, and chanting repetitions ensures that he hammers that meaning into your brain until it's embedded in your skull. The track 'Don't hesitate do it, do it right now' simply repeats that one phrase in various ways for 3 minutes - it runs about the length of an average pop song, yet in that short time it so excites and exhorts the listener that you'll be rushing out to mow the lawn, cut the logs or do immediately whatever else it was you'd be putting off until tomorrow. Not unlike his UK contemporary Bob Cobbing, Hanson also works with such texts as strange stories ('Snake Jerroth'), lists of imaginary animals ('Bestiary'), cut-up letter texts, and even an acrostic form in 'After John' which when printed on the page spells out the name of composer John Cage! In addition to mastering all this written esoterica, Hanson proves he's no slouch when it comes to wielding the scissors behind the tape-editing suite, working mostly at EMS Stockholm, where he manipulates tapes of his voice to devastating effect - using filters, loops, varispeeding and multiple overdubs until at times he sounds like an entire choir of demented, acid-spitting bees. On 1995's 'Finale' for example, the text is interleaved with what sounds like an altercation between various evil manifestations of Punchinello, sprouting out of the earth at an alarming rate. A true delight to have the work of this maestro, who incidentally was also manager of the Fylkingen society for 15 years, come to light.

CM Von Hausswolff

A Lecture on Disturbances in Architecture

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1036 CD (2002)

Throughout his time as a sound-artist, Carl Michael Von Hausswolff has made something of a personal speciality out of conjuring music out of 'nothing' - recording the most unlikely environmental sources where nothing much appears to be happening and yet producing amazingly complex, and sometimes extremely loud, sound-pieces out of them. In his days as a 'touring band' with Phauss in the 1980s, when he took his sound art out on the road, he would accumulate further sound-recordings from the different environments they visited, and recycle these back to the audience as part of that night's performance. Then, there's his gallery works, such as 2001's Operations of Spirit Communication, comprised mostly of layers of sound captured at his own art-actions and performance-events and brought together into a deeply resonating work, all etched on a vinyl disk that delivers a sonic wallop strong enough to shift you into the Phantom Zone. Here, that idea of capturing the 'atmosphere of a room' is explored to further very extreme degrees over 7 gorgeous tracks - all indeed depicting some aspect of the theme of disturbances in architecture. The track titles refer directly to physical things that cause such disturbances in rooms and buildings - variations in heating, high ceilings, thick walls, and (most mysteriously) 'Unbalanced Measurements of Hygiene Spaces'. One thinks of Francisco López and his recording made inside a New York building, but whereas that recording transformed mundanity into an aesthetic experience, Carl Michael's very direct approach creates much more of a palpable atmosphere. Depending on the quality of your CD player, if you play this



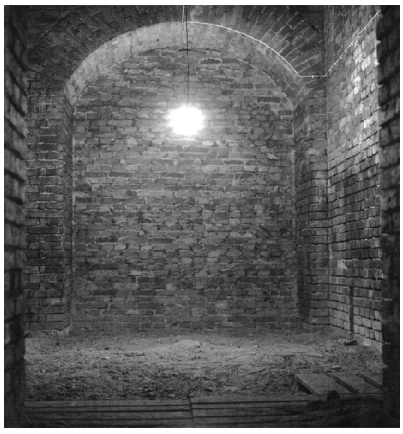
loud enough and let the amazing sounds envelop you and resonate in your room, you'll be transported into another dimension immediately. You can really feel that physicality all around you. There are heavy sounds, loud and oppressive sounds, shrill unbearable tones ringing in your ears, and even something that sounds like exaggerated footfalls along an echoing corridor. One track even makes the walls sing - with the voices of angels. Framed by an 'archive' recording of architect Buckminster Fuller at the start, and a voice saying 'Thank you' at the end, this is far less claustrophobic than some of his other intensive pieces, remains packed with mystical meanings, and is one of CMVH's most satisfying experiments yet to see print.

Is there something about life in Sweden that keeps everyone indoors? Most of Ingmar Bergman's movies are set indoors, and when Woody Allen saw fit to pastiche Bergman's movies, he called his tribute movie Interiors, referring as much to the interior lives of the characters as to the oppressive locations he shot them in. CMVH's CD above sets out to use sound to create its own walls, and build an imaginary room all around you, which he then uses as a platform for his pretentious ideas about architecture. Leif's Extraction CD above describes the entire world as 'the room which we all mutually share', but he sets out 'with the main purpose to change that room'. Clearly, these guys need to get out of the house more.

Leif Elggren

Latrine

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1021 CD (2001)



With Latrine, Leif is aiming at something else again, but it's no less inward-looking - it's a nightmarish journey into a world of shit, akin to Dante's Inferno rewritten by Dyno-Rod. It leads off with a marathon 46 minute work, of which the first 10-15 minutes are virtually insufferable - a dense, smothering blanket of sub-bass and low-key electronic poisons of such claustrophobic intensity that the sound wraps itself around you like a constricting bed-sheet, or perhaps a winding-sheet - fit for the deathly corpse you are about to become. Then, you break out of this tunnel into another, no less oppressive zone - a vaguely aquatic, cavernous scape filled with looping repetitions of nastiness. Given the sleeve art of man sitting on toilet - which is frankly an unforgivable visual cliche of crushing banality - and interior shot of a brick-lined cellar, it's clear that Leif is attempting to describe 46 minutes in the life of a bowel movement, leading the listener on a horrific journey through defecatory lavatorial hell, along constricting pipes, and emerging into a filthy plague-ridden sewer of no return. Indeed, Latrine was premiered at a group exhibition called 'Transformation' in Karlsborg Castle in Sweden in 2000, where he played this sound composition 'recorded entirely in the toilet' inside the small room in a herring store. Listeners to the sound-art could pass their time reading the bizarre essay - no less than an attempted cultural history of the 'meaning' of excrement - which was posted outside the installation. Reproduced here, this essay leads off with 'Swedenborg describes the lowest level of hell as Excrement Hell, from where there is no return nor any way of sinking any lower into the pit...' So there you have it. Certainly heavy listening here, and not exactly relieved by the two shorter tracks pegged on the end, which are no less constipated or bowel-tensing than their forebear. However, if it's any consolation, there's virtually zero scatological context to all of this - Leif is not treating his audience as though we were all turds in the swimming pool of life - one does not feel remotely polluted by this listening experience, but it certainly doesn't impart any sense of comfort either. Colonic irrigation treatment it ain't.

Various Artists

circle 0

SWEDEN FYLKINGEN RECORDS FYCD 1019: 1-2 2 X CD (2002)

Like a mythical two-headed Nordic beast roaming the frozen north comes this compilation of minimal electronic music: mostly Swedish from what I can gather, but with some outsiders along for the ride. Somewhat unfortunately for us it proves to be the sort of Nordic beast that's quite timid when actually confronted, and when you take it home for afternoon tea you discover it just really wanted someone to talk to all along.

Minimalism implies a resistance to development, and there is certainly a lot of nobody going very far on disc one. Of course it's not that they're not going anywhere, in fact everybody is very busy going nowhere! It's a feature of both of these CDs that the most rigorously 'minimal' tracks are those by the non-Swedes and Richard Chartier, one of the few Americans in this comp, comes up with probably the most minimal (is there such a thing?) track here: small flurries of sound separated by long periods of near-silence. Perhaps not surprising seen as he's also to be found on the Trente Oiseaux roster.

The music's stasis, and its traditional expression in the use of drones, silence and the like, also implies a limitlessness. Nobody gets down with that dialectic better than Heimir Björgulfsson with 'spiral loop', a one minute track that we are instructed should be listened to using repeat playback mode. Conceptual or what!? The very name of the track and Heimir's obvious understanding of such matters suggest he may have more than a passing interest in the work of Robert Smithson. The most developed (least minimal?), and straight out electro-acoustic piece on this CD is by Ronsun, which proves to in fact be a remix of Tore Honoré Böe's track 'Siesta'. Surprising perhaps given the nature of the latter's Origami Republika project.

The last track on this CD by Dion Workman is all tricky high frequencies that do funny things to your ears and brings to mind the sneaking suspicion that the people behind these sounds are really all running round in lab coats. This fetish for the purely technical has always been electronic music's evil twin from the get-go and it must be said that many run that line dangerously close here. Of course that impersonality is something which has always marked minimalist ventures and for all I know may in fact be a prerequisite for joining the club.

Disc two reveals an updated minimalism, full of microgrooving minimal electronica, with beats (of sorts) for the kids. Of course again nobody is going very far, but at least this time they're shaking that thang! Kid606, American superstar and one of the only names I recognise here, is strangely one of the few to really disappoint. His track 'station to station' never starts up like others here and could easily belong on the first CD. Much more fun is Tennis with an impossibly brilliant sonic realization and deconstruction of the early computer game of the same name, except that it bears the cryptic title of 'the interview'. The tracks that work best on this CD are the ones that trip along in a syncopated fashion and stumble almost surprisingly into a rhythm (think of an electronic-but-nowhere-near-as-damn-funky version of Elvin Jones' drum solo intro to part three of 'A Love Supreme'). The tracks that don't work are the ones that seem entirely too obvious in their methods: Hayce's 'cadillac' comes to mind, which sounds all the times you've been stuck in a horrible club at 1am, and Minimal Sweden who don't sound minimal at all. It is left to Silent Comfort at the end to show us that cold comfort is a long but not necessarily bad thing at all.

Yes Minimalism: the culmination of the whole sordid modernist enterprise eternally occupied with the purification of means. There is no doubt that the people here are working with an extremely reduced set of resources and all power to them for trying to make the most out of the few scraps that they have. Of course Minimalism as a movement was long ago co-opted by the mainstream and is now just as likely to rear its suitably stylised head in a television commercial for life insurance as it is on a CD of electronic music, and that in the main is possibly the biggest problem here. What was once a

shockingly reductivist philosophy can now seem like just another cynical ploy to get us to consume.

Fylkingen Records is the imprint of a Swedish society founded in the carefree days of 1933 to promote chamber music. They've come a long way then to championing music of the sort featured here and 'intermedia' (I've always hated multi) performance. And indeed both of these CDs readily conjure up visual others: Disc one could be the soundtrack to a really long Swedish film, featuring lots of snow and plenty of meaningful social commentary; disc two the innocuous background to a party thrown by ultra-hip Swedish design students in a stylish Stockholm apartment complete with mood lighting and elegant furniture.

AARON ROBERTSON

Rozenhall

Eyeland

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1042 VINYL LP (2003)

Daniel Rozenhall turns in a solo electronics sockamagee with his Eyeland LP, and he designed the sleeve art for it too, which looks like a close up of some ancient map of Planet Mars drawn on parchment by early cosmic explorers from the 15th century. On the grooves, he proves himself to be no less of a cosmic explorer in sound, batting out some demented, primitive electronic organ work like a spastic version of Sun Ra. His stuttering organ phrases struggle to be heard amidst a swirling miasma of electronic noises, voices and treatments. The epic title track is spread over two sides, gathering momentum in part one and turning into a chaotic, exciting and sumptuous fest of excess, before more or less settling down into a coarse, raggedy drone-field on side two. Charged with magnetic influence it be. Presumably part improvised - it sounds like an ape running on a fun rampage through a studio - Eyeland was realised in EMS in Stockholm between 2000 and 2002. Recommended with pleasure to lovers of overloaded, textural, raging free noise.

DEG

DEG

SWEDEN FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS FER 1035 VINYL LP (2002)

DEG is perhaps one of the most bizarre artefacts to have recently spewed from this Swedish collective pool of talents. It's a live recording of Kevin Drumm, Leif Elggren and Mats Gustafsson letting it all hang out in what sounds like a single-take live improvisation, done at Fylkingen in October 2001. Drumm - fresh from basking in the glory of his triumphant noise CD Sheer Hellish Miasma released on MEGO last year - plays overamped electric guitar as though he were whacking snakes with a hickory stick, and lets rip with obscene blasts of electronic filth from his old analogue synthesiser. Gustafsson sputters and squeaks on reeds and tenor saxophone with the impatience of a grouchy old llama spitting in the faces of many a stupid Gaucho. Elggren's precise contribution remains uncredited, but presumably it's he who provides the twisted voice recordings that seep into the hyper-active arena near the start and end of the 'work', and used his conceptual art skills to devise the contextual package of this monster, which otherwise might have been unleashed as just another crazy improv LP. His sleeve note refers first of all to the legend of the Golem, which as you all remember comes from an Eastern European legend and describes a Prometheus-like monster made of clay, which in the Jewish version of the myth is brought to life by the insertion under its tongue of a scroll with a mystical number written on it. The meaning of that number is 'God causes to be'. In Elggren's take on the tale, the clay becomes dough; then, taking the initials of the trio's surnames, he forms the acronym DEG. He presumes that DEG is a dough-like substance which can be mixed out of flour, salt and water following a recipe, for which he gives the ingredients. Not content with that, a sample of DEG becomes part of the sleeve art - it's a tiny lump of an indeterminate white substance - ready-made ectoplasm - manufactured by artist Lotta Melin, laminated by Gen Ken Montgomery (the Minister of Lamination in Leif's imaginary kingdom) and mounted on the front cover of the LP. Leif's sleeve note explaining all of this is printed on art paper and inserted into the sleeve, much like the scroll is inserted into the mouth of the golem. This extraordinary conceit reflects back on the music - and it does indeed start to sound as though the three are engaged on some secret project to build a golem-figure in a mystical alchemical laboratory, and from the stages in their music-making the players themselves start to assume the proportions of magickal chefs preparing this forbidden dough in a grotesque kitchen. In this context, the half-apprehended voices that haunt the recording become that shade more terrifying. The fact that he has managed to engage others to participate in manufacturing the fine detail of the sleeve art is also very encouraging, adding more reality to the fantasy of his play-world, the kingdom of Elgaland-Vargaland. Can you DEG it?

Rune Lindblad

Die Stille Liebe

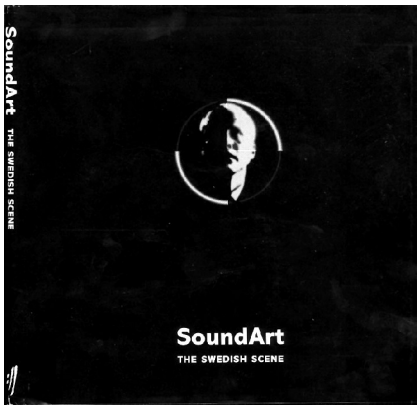
SWEDEN ELEKTRON EM1006/7 2 x CD (2003)

In conclusion, Sweden is a land of many contrasts. Nowhere is this made more manifest than on the double-CD by Rune Lindblad, an astonishing collection of his works taken from his history: The first CD alone will drag your mind through an entire universe of amazing unfamiliarity, all in the space of 73 minutes. It's immediate to anyone with a pair of unclogged ears that Rindblad, like all great artists, succeeded in creating worlds of his own, and inventing a new language with which to communicate. He can make electronic music sing with the voices of alien birds; he can delineate imaginary landscapes, painted with strange colours. Vast explosions in the distant deserts, boulders rolling down the mountainside. He can make his machines bleat like a chorus of monotonous car-horns, pulsing across an industrial wasteland. On 1972's 'Die Stille Liebe', the title track for this comp, he builds the most amazing onslaught of loud, throbbing electronics,

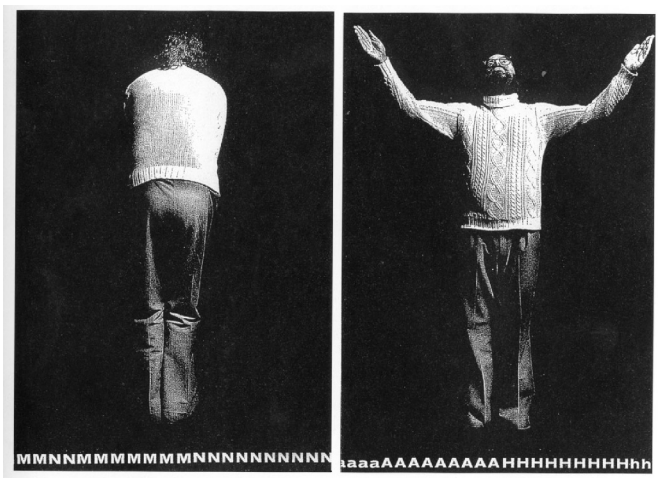
clashing with scrambled voices and changing tack every few seconds, a fragmentary impression of a chaotic vision filtered through an electric storm. Alarming and apocalyptic, this extreme cut will surely find favour amongst the torpid youth who need an invigorating dose of insane experimental music to restart their sluggish hearts. Second CD no less impressive; contains more varied experiments, two sound-text works which merge found recordings with tape edits into odd narratives, a number of 'pure' electronic pieces from the 1970s (at least one of the uses the Buchla synth), and even a mysterious organ piece from 1964. The 1974 'Associationer' reminded me very much of the work of fellow Swede Åke Hodell, with its use of strident shouty voices and an underpinning anti-militaristic message. Hodell's triple CD retrospective Verbal Brainwash and other works from 2000 would have been well-placed in this column, but we reviewed it already in issue 9. 'Gryning', also from 1973, is another electronic abstraction which roars, bleeps and chugs and brings magnificent collection to triumphant close.

If (like me) you weren't really much aware of Rune Lindblad before, you probably aren't alone. In Sweden however, he was held in high regard and has been extremely influential on many modern composers in that country, many of whom are named in the paragraphs above, and who lent their weight to the preparation of this excellent collection. Daniel Rozenhall wrote the texts for the booklet, with contributions from Sten Hanson and CM Von Hausswolff. His original records are now rather scarce, although CM Von H did issue a vinyl collection on his Radium label in 1988, and there's also a Pogus CD which gathers famous early piece 'Death of the Moon' along with other gems. This collection - smartly packaged, and decorated with paintings and collages by Lindblad - may indeed put Lindblad 'on the map' as compilers hope: it's a historical survey, with most pieces realised in the 1970s and 1980s, but there's one early 1960-61 piece. Herein be a startling mixture of electronic composition, musique concrète, and text-sound compositions not a million miles away from the sound-poetry of Sten Hanson. The collection is all unreleased material and was hand-picked by Mattias Petersson, Kent Tankred and Berndt Berndtsson from the available archives at Fylkingen and EMS in Stockholm.

Lindblad's visibility in the rarified world of electronic composition was never very high even during his lifetime (he died in 1991). According to texts in booklet, this might have been because he lived and worked in Gothenburg, rather than capital city Stockholm; or because he was too much of a pioneer in the early days. When he organised the first ever concert of musique concrète in Sweden in 1957, the audience was noticeably shocked and upset, and the newspapers ranged their critical forces against this music, complaining of 'torture' and 'noise'. More pertinent though was Lindblad's rather spontaneous approach to his work and composition. To begin with, he thought nothing of combining tape work with electronic work - which, though it may be commonplace now, in the 1950s was not the done thing. If you believe slant of history as told by booklet, the French school (Schaeffer, tapes, environmental sounds) and the German school (Stockhausen and Koenig, machines, pure electronics) were at daggers drawn over this point, each believing they had monopoly on correct method of modern music. If so, no help from either quarter would have been forthcoming and Lindblad would have been left high and dry. In addition, though drawn to using tapes to make sound collages at start of 1950s, he didn't have easy access to necessary equipment to do it, or guidance from anyone who could tutor him in this new field. Add to this the fact that he trained as a painter, and you have a recipe for the development of an extremely variegated, partly self-taught, approach to modern music. Although it's possible such a man will end up marginalised and outside of the 'mainstream' of the avant-garde, and in danger of becoming his own worst enemy, his supporters think otherwise. CM Von H is positively in favour of Rune's truculence, seeing it as an oppositional force to mediocrity, especially in the media. Sten Hanson also sees Lindblad's ruggedness in positive light: 'He thought about music like a painter rather than a composer. He didn't care about any of the formal compositional criteria. His music was almost always monolithic'.



Finally, if all the above isn't enough to satisfy your craving for doing it the Swedish way, then your only hope is turn to book SoundArt: The Swedish Scene (STIM / Svensk Musik 2001, ISBN 91-85470-83-x). With its exhaustive texts by Teddy Hultberg, this explains in great detail just why Rune Lindblad was so important as a founding father and goes into even more history of the scene. Then you get potted descriptions of all the big Swedes with lists of their major releases. Plus sumptuous photos of men in eye-catching and bewildering poses, possibly doing performance art, or possibly something even more extreme. As if that wasn't sufficient, you also get two CDs chock-full of strange music and noises.



Firework Edition:
Sigfridsvagen 6, 126 50 Hagersten, Sweden
www.algonet.se/~tankred/fer.html
www.fireworkeditionrecords.com

Elektron:
Elektron/SEAMS, Box 38169, SE-100 64 Stockholm, Sweden
www.elektron.nu

Fylkingen:
Box 170 44, 104 62 Stockholm, Sweden
www.fylkingen.se
www.cda.se

STIM Swedish Music Information Centre:
Box 27327, SE-102 54 Stockholm, Sweden
www.mic.stim.se
swedmic@stim.se

www.barelyauditable.com

barely auditable records

Recent releases:

Kyle Bruckmann, Ernesto Diaz-Infante, John Shiurba, and Karen Stackpole ***Grand Mal*** w/ Pax Recordings

". . . a bright-toned yet challenging suite of snippets . . . no quarter is given the eardrums, yet good humor carries the day. . . A disc to return to again and again, impressive for its lofty levels of extended virtuosity, but even more for its improvisations — each showing its own beautiful kind of composure." — Tom Djll

Kyle Bruckmann, Scott Rosenberg, and Michael Zerang ***Six Synaptics*** w/ Ertia Creations

"Delicate filaments of sound evolve quickly into demonstrative statements of authority. . . The music builds up a head of steam, but it never reaches a point where a predictable continuity of momentum is achieved. Instead, it feasts on irregular movements, serrated edges, and explosive outbursts. . . [A] most unusual and innovative session." — Frank Rubolino, One Final Note

Anthony Braxton/Scott Rosenberg ***Compositions/Improvisations 2000***

"Focus, variety in tones and colors, stellar playing: what else could one want? Strongly recommended." — François Couture, All-Music Guide

Kyle Bruckmann ***Entymology***

"Entymology could have been only a curiosity, something exotic-sounding for the improv crowd, but it goes beyond that. It so happens Bruckmann is a seasoned improviser with impressive extended technique and peculiar artistic flair. An enchanting experience that expands the possibilities (and the comprehension) of the double reed family."
-- François Couture, All-Music Guide

Available through North Country, Verge, Jazz Loft, Fringes, and ImproJazz

sonig 32 schlammpeitziger - everything without all inclusive LP/CD

sonig 31 lithops — scrypt LP/CD

sonig 29 aelters — ardchilds com.undo LP/CD

sonig 30 vert — small pieces loosely joined LP/CD

sonig 28 ae — bootleg cd/lp

sonig label + mailorder
kl. griechenmarkt 28-30
50676 koeln
www.sonig.com

distribution: shellshock/uk, revolver/usa, zomba/d

KOJI ASANO

Winter 2003 Collection

033 Zoo Telepathy

034 Wind Gauge

035 The Giant Squid
A Collection of Short Pieces Vol.1
works from 1997-1998

Available at Our Online Store

www.kojiasano.com

ASANO MUSIC PRODUCTION

SOLSTICE

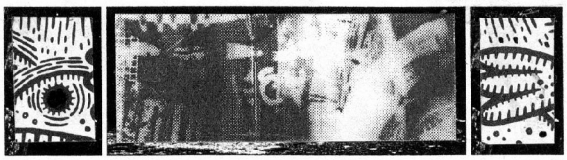
info@kojiasano.com

ThE NeW BlOcKaDeRs

GeSaMtNiChTsWeRk
20th. AnTiVeRsArY AnTiOlOgY
(4 CD set / booklet (studio/live 1982-2002)

20th. AnTiVeRsArY OfFeNsIvE
CD (Live at The Termite Club, Leeds, 2003)

FaLtEn
10 inch EP (clear vinyl)



TNB/MeRzBoW CD
Collaboration between two noise legends

TrIbUtE
CD set / booklet
TNB reworked by other (selected) international artists

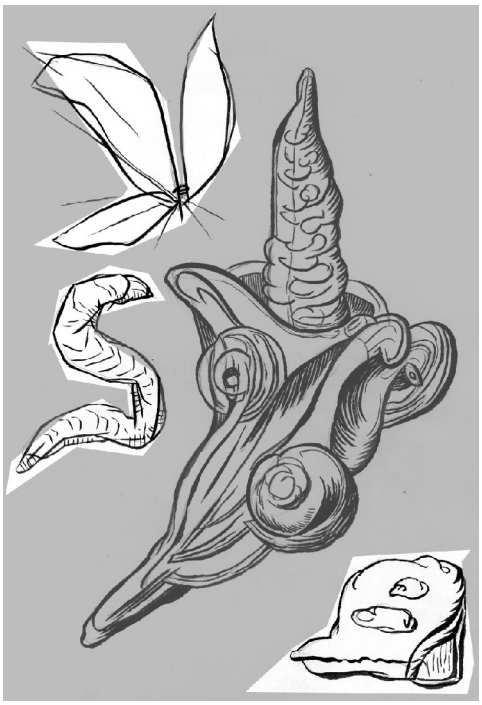
LiVe At HiNoEuMa CD
TNB's final live performance, London, 2003

'One of the most radical avant garde projects ever!'
(Evolver)

www.thenewblockaders.org.uk

FIELD RECORDINGS... PLUS ++

SOUNDING DOCUMENTS FROM OUR LOVELESS ISLES

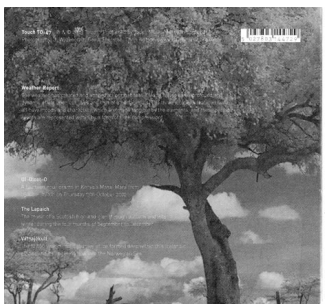


Chris Watson
Weather Report
UNITED KINGDOM TOUCH TO:47 CD (2003)

On his most ambitious work to date, Chris Watson takes the raw materials of his documentary recordings and goes one step further, by assembling and layering related recordings together in these three, powerful, 18-minute suites. This CD creates a profound, almost-panoramic experience thereby, surveying in sound the geophysical state of the globe today. First comes 'Ol-Olool-O', a collection of recordings brought back from Africa. We have the usual vivid recordings of animals, people, weather, and the sundry activity of scattered places, but sequenced together in ways that we couldn't normally hear. Things are up close, then suddenly distant; several related sound events happen simultaneously, and do it in full stereo too. As though we were a 'privileged' ear moving freely through the wonders of the world and gathering in sensory information in abundance. Dans la nuit Africaine, la vie bouillonne et palpite. Here we enter the cauldron of primordial soup, communing with life in all its diverse and wondrous forms. Everything is bound in by the dramatic weather conditions, most noticeably the gathering storms whose darkening skies are all but visible, so utterly present are the sound recordings of it. Around index point 6:00, the lion's roar ushers in the thunderstorm; it's but one of many underplayed juxtapositions, coincidences and confluences of sound events that make this work all the stronger. 14 hours of life in the Masai Mara condensed into 18 minutes; without a doubt this track alone qualifies as the aural equivalent to Peter Kubelka's famous micro-structured single-frame based film, Unsere Afrikareise (Our Trip to Africa).

'The Laipach' is a hymn to wind and water, gathered from the 'music of a Scottish highland glen' over a four-month period. The layered sounds are all totally in sympathy with each other, and with nature, bringing home the roaring energy of these waters. Clean air and clean waters are the abiding impression in this corner of an environmental paradise. The 'mixage' and editing technique again brings impossible, miraculous events to life...birdsong audible over the top of roaring waters. The drama of this work is, at times, almost terrifying; the implacable and awesome powers of nature are uncovered, and with great clarity. 'Vatnajökull' is the recording of ice floes from an Icelandic glacier, as it flows into the Norwegian sea. Here's the most 'alien' sounds on the entire disc, mainly because they're so unfamiliar; once again our privileged ear is witness to things we don't normally encounter. A rare event; strange groaning, cracking and heaving over a constant hissing sound. It's not overstating the case to say you can feel the physical properties of this huge mass of icy matter, its considerable volume amply conveyed and expressed by the in-depth, precise sound recording. A deep and mysterious experience will be thine, just through listening. The most eerie aspect of it is the strange 'singing' events which occur throughout, especially by the end of the piece when we're tossing about on the ocean and an unidentifiable spectral singing hovers over the surface of the sea, causing you to believe in sirens.

With this exceptionally important release, Chris Watson confirms his unassailable position as one of the greatest sound artists alive in the world today. Clearly a man who so deeply loves our home planet that, like a latter-day 19th century explorer, he will go to tremendous lengths to seek out and bear witness to its most outlandish beauties, and bring back the materials necessary to assemble this - a detailed, living portrait of our planet's weather, its life and eco-systems, its geography. The music he makes is always the result of a lengthy, painstaking process, one that involves travelling, listening, looking and learning, and a deep sensitivity to the mysteries of terra firma. His work benefits one hundredfold from this new compressed and layered, impressionistic story-telling approach; never has it sounded so utterly compelling, bringing the magic to life in your living room. A truly essential purchase.

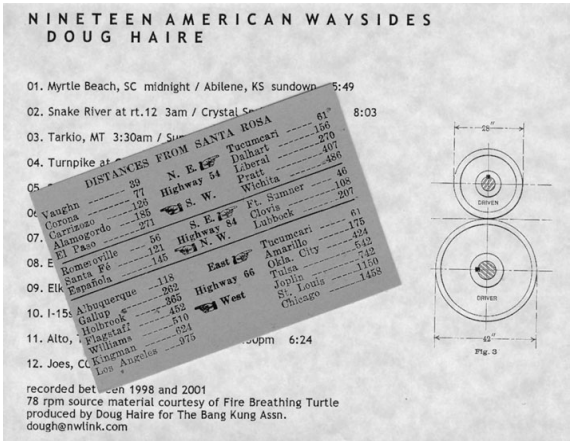


ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.touchmusic.org.uk

Alejandra & Aeron
Scotch Monsters

GERMANY SOFTLMUSIC SOM 302 CD (2003)



What a fantastic record, in the real sense of the word - an electronic celebration of the supernatural. So glad to hear this welcome return of my fave fantasists from the USA, with perhaps their best release to date. (Note on the title - preferred term should be 'Scottish' or 'Scots' monsters...'Scotch' is a blend of whiskey). These 16 tracks start with field recordings, gathered from their locales and travels in Scotland, around and after the time the duo did a gallery performance piece in Stirling with help of Mr Diskono. Purporting to be a celebration of supernatural beasties of the north countree, Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Salinas are prepared to believe all the superstitious blarney they read about Scotland, and have researched their material well. The first 8 tracks tell us all we need to know about water spirits, while part two describes earth spirits. And what a magical and strangely refreshing odyssey this CD traces.

Early on, we hear the familiar slipping and sliding between documentary recordings and electronic dreamworlds which is one of this duo's hallmarks. No-one else I know does anything else remotely like it; a marked switch between sound-worlds that is as potent and effective as dreaming, or great cinema, or taking drugs, or practical time-travel, all four rolled into one instant experience. We hear seductive drones, mysterious echoes and traces of other sounds, and something utterly evocative underlying every moment. By track three 'Trows', the sharp edits reverberate like gunshots; as though waking us up from the dream-like trance of the previous gorgeous work 'Each uisge', so that we suddenly find ourselves in the middle of a bleak field, under a darkened sky, with a dark deep river nearby. Stones thrown into that river produce impossible sound events, repeated sploshes, which turn themselves into lovely music in less than a second. I suppose you need really good stereo speakers to get the full effect; I had played this in The Auld Steeple House in Dundee (when attending Kill Yr Timid Notion festival) on my Discman, and got nothing like the same killer feeling from it.

The duo attempt to tell the stories of monsters and elves, such as the Dunters, the Red Caps, the Knuckleavee and the Gray Man. Listen to the tiny, detailed sounds on 'Heather pixi' and you realise this clever sound manipulation is motivated by the artists thinking and behaving in the same ways as the occult beings they're trying to bring to life, getting under the aetherial skin of these mystical will-o-the-wisps. In some ways it's ironic that it takes these unassuming Americans to reconnect this island of ours to our own lost heritage, this by now barely-visible 'earth magic' that once informed and guided our ancestors. We might make an exception of Shirley Collins, though even her work isn't too strong on unpacking the supernatural ballads. This is 21st century folk music, finding a way into the past using the technology of today. This CD is like a dark and wondrous children's book, as good as the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang, and something which I'd recommend to any child aged from 6 to 60 instead of Harry 'fucking' Potter any day of the week. Including Woden's Day.

Wrote most of the above while hooked on the 'water' half of the disc, yet the 'earth' half is, if anything, even weirder. Through the remaining eight tracks, foreign voices leak into the mix. There's a strange instrument playing - perhaps by way of treated loops - on 'Henkies', that is 'drop-dead from fright' haunting, and has to be heard to be believed. It's like a wobbly guitar dipped in beeswax, played by an unearthly mannikin. And 'Fear Liath More' has a whistling noise which the word 'eerie' doesn't even begin to describe; I thought of M R James, his tale 'Whistle and I'll Come to you my Lad', and was too scared to blow out the candle that night. Played it in my house over feast of Samhain, a powerful magic pagan festival when the barrier between the spirit world and the mortal world is at its weakest.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.softlmusic.com

Doug Haire

Nineteen American Waysides

USA ANOMALOUS RECORDS NOM17 CD (2002)

Cut-above collection of semi-mystical, partially treated field recordings fetched back from road trips by this American sound artist. Of the 19 sites, some are presented as edited-together suites so that we experience two visits on the same track - or even simultaneously, for all we know. Mostly we hear the sounds of crickets chirping, to produce 'natural' percussion effects - and the gentle roar of traffic on the road, to get that pleasing deep drone sound. Occasionally a rare 78 rpm record (borrowed from the collection of Rob Millis and Jeffery Taylor) will add an extra dimension to the experience. On track 3 this results in the vaguely poetic effect of car engines growling along to an old tango record. The fifth cut, captured in Salinas, Kansas, has some nice distorted radio voices added to the formula. Doug Haire is of the 'stand and wonder' school of field recordists, and this collection overall is perhaps rather inconsequential, but it has a very 'open' feel that matches the wide open spaces of its subjects. The unedited, continual sequences pull in the listener and keep the attention, as we study the horizons for more details in these simple sunlit, blue-sky, yellow desert expanses.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

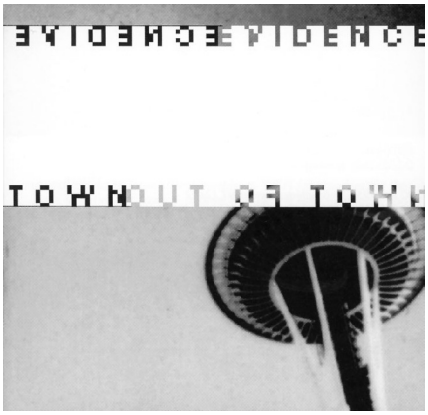
PO Box 22195, Seattle, WA 98122-0195, USA
orders@anomalousrecords.com
www.anomalousrecords.com

Ven Voisey

8L

FRANCE NANINANI RECORDINGS NREC002 CD-R (2003)

By contrast, this one is completely interior - and I mean interior. Voisey captured all the sounds hereon during a two year stay in an apartment, capturing such insignificant sound events as radiators hissing, traffic passing outside the window, and fridge motors. It may help to know that American sound artist Voisey didn't particularly like living in this apartment, but was bound to do so by a lease or something - and it's likely he regarded his sojourn with no small amount of bitterness. This may account for the excessively claustrophobic nature of these works. There's a continual motor hum, which sometimes is escalated into an intensely harsh hissing effect, or scaled down into a muffled vague roaring as of gigantic moths playing in the apartment above. Here's something that may be a kettle boiling in the kitchen, or the whistle of a gas jet. The CD starts out loud - almost optimistic, but it ends up small, cramped and tinged with the closed-in pessimistic view that Voisey clearly acquired during his 'prison sentence' in this hated accommodation. By the final track, the sounds resolve themselves clearly into passing traffic outside, suggesting the possibility of escape for our poor trapped inmate. The CD is backed up by a visual element, which plays as a CD-ROM and reveals further details of the circumstances of the making of this record, a floor map of the apartment, and tiny 20-second movies of such tightly-framed details as light switches, fridge doors and grimy windows. I tell you, after glimpsing these depressingly mundane interior fragments you're climbing the walls yourself - I'm just glad the poor schmoe got away! This is of interest; so heavily processed that it barely qualifies as field recordings and at least one track could be mistaken for 'pure' electronica - not that it matters. Ven Voisey also runs the Throat label, home to such luminaries as Cal Crawford and Vertonen.

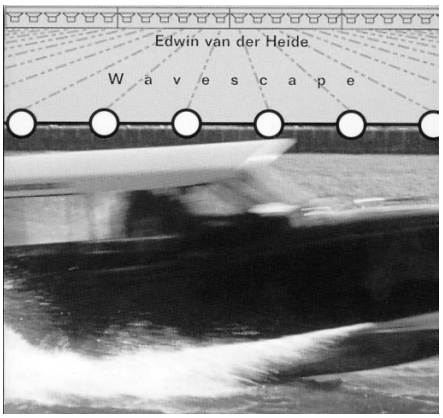


ED PINSENT 11-2003

11 rue du relais de la poste, 27550 La Riviere Thibouville, France
naninanicorp@free.fr

Evidence

Out Of Town



USA DEEP LISTENING DL 23-2003 CD (2003)

Scott Smallwood, who did the fine Desert Winds CD for the Deep Listening label in 2002, here joins forces with Stephan Moore to produce a lengthy, rambling field recording work. They gathered their sources from a road trip and brought back recordings captured in Seattle (hence the Space Needle on the cover) and Michigan. The chosen sites, from their capsuled descriptions, appeared to be jolly interesting in a marginal sort of way; the pumphouse of a harbour, a motel bathroom, a motel floor, and a staircase under highway 99 on the Seattle waterfront. The recordings, rarely presented 'straight', have been gently modified to produce electro-acoustic (ish) compositions. I really wish I could enjoy this one, but it's pretty tedious; the potentially very interesting source material is reduced, not enhanced, by their interventions. On the first, they look for (or create) rhythms which aren't needed; the knocking sound is close to ambient disco music. On the second, the over-treated tapes generate formless washes like a 10th rate copy of Tangerine Dream. The motel floor recording likewise has irregular rhythms, which are even more annoying - like someone tapping their fingers while waiting for a phone call. Maybe that's what was going on. The last two cuts are marginally better; 'Out Of Town' has some nice stuttering radio broadcasts (which are re-recorded apparently) alongside the ambience of their motel bathroom; and 'Aurora Viaduct', while not staggeringly original (the sound of passing traffic once again) at least benefits from being very long, and was captured from an imaginative vantage-point and in a place which is probably overlooked by most visitors to that endroit. However, the pretentious sleeve note, referring to 'acoustic and timbral eccentricities', doesn't do much to win the hearts of listeners; I could do with more demystifying than the opposite. Either way I can't get convinced that this is anything more than shapeless, aimless drivel.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

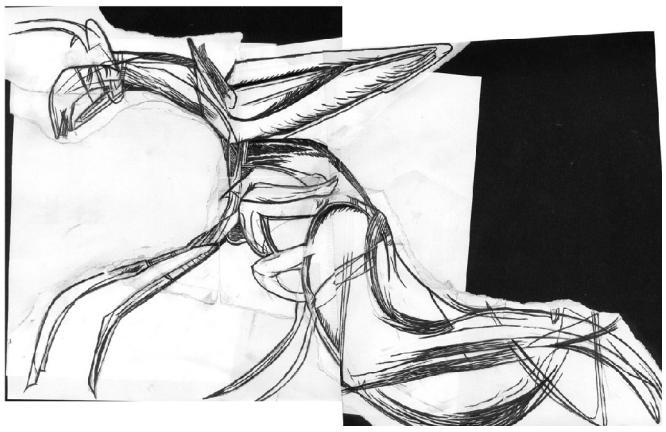
PO Box 1956, 75 Broadway, Kingston NY 12402 USA
dlc@deeplistening.org
www.deeplistening.org

Edwin van der Heide

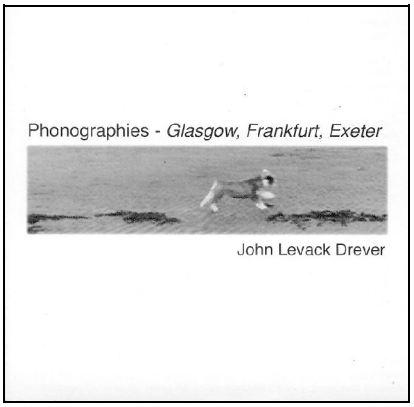
Wavescape

THE NETHERLANDS STAALPLAAT STMCD 025 3" CD (2002)

Here's this issue's obligatory 'watery' disc - of which we haven't had enough lately. Fascinated by his observation that boats on the water don't appear to make much noise, this Dutch artist put two hydrophones (special underwater microphones) in a river in Holland. I gather there are not a few waterways in that country. Through his art, Van der Heide allows us to truly hear, for the first time, the sound that passing boats make when going about their business. He even turned this work into an installation, you know.



Result? An incredibly tedious and mind-numbingly 'literal' recording, which could only be of interest to the boating equivalent of a trainspotter, the kind of nerd who 'gets off' on facts about barges, police cruisers and yachts. Finding any artistic merit in this is like trying to get drunk on a bottle of Evian. I'd sooner drown myself in the Zuider Zee than endure this yawner again.



ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 11453, 1001GL, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.staalplaat.com

Philip Scheffner

a/c

GERMANY PONG PONG02 CD (2002)

Like the work of Evidence and Doug Haire, here's another CD made out of visits to a city - in this case, the rather unusual circumstances of making a visit to Bombay from Berlin. If you want 'acoustic and timbral eccentricities' (and who doesn't?), then may I propose this is a better place to start. Right from his opening moments, Scheffner switches freely between multiple sound samples in a barrage of micro-edits, in such ways as to form fascinating mosaic patterns. These patterned fields are packed with irregular cross-rhythms and generate effective time-lapse, time-travel sensations. Streets, voices, shopping malls - many atmospheres from across time and space, gathered into a digital bottle. Then everything melds into a steady, poignant droning and chiming effect, which pulls you in very successfully. All that on the first track!

Unlike other less pro-active field recorders, who seem content merely to stand open-mouthed in a meadow like a raggedy-ass scarecrow with big ears (not that there's anything wrong with that approach), Scheffner is attempting to make 'a journey to a fictional place', rather than reveal something about the external world. As such, his continually fading and lapsing sound events seem to correspond nicely with certain human thought processes, such as lapses of memory, odd coincidences, and fleeting connections. This nebulous concept is realised with such lucidity here that it notches this CD higher than just another electronica CD (which in places it may resemble superficially).

The second track, with the recording of a person discussing something about what it means to live in Bombay, reveals that Scheffner is asking questions of some sort about the nature of modern urban dwelling. The chance reference to a particular well-known tune in the dialogue has just been echoed, very sympathetically, by the pieced-together melody preceding it. Then, very distant echoes of Bombay itself seem to leak into the gently undulating rhythms. Scheffner's gentle questioning line is backed up by the faintly 'quizzical' tone of his music. In summa, this is a unique dreamy electronic 'fantasy' construct not a million miles away from Alejandra and Aeron territory; a fantasy from which moments of reality emerge, as adjuncts or contextual referents. Whatever the heck that means...

ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.pong-berlin.de

John Levack Drever

Phonographies - Glasgow, Frankfurt, Exeter

UNITED KINGDOM SOUND-MARKED SM03-01 CD (2003)

In contrast to Scheffner's 'thinking ear' approach, Edinburgh-born Drever is a prize-winning and respected artist who asks no questions at all about the cities he surveys. He unquestioningly scoops up whatever sounds he may gather in his minidisc device, and represents it back to us in a one-dimensional, unchallenging way. This release, while not at all an offputting collection of sounds (I listened to the whole thing in one sitting and was far

from discontented on that count at least), doesn't tell you very much; his aural snapshots of Glasgow, Frankfurt and Exeter merely show us some of the banalities of modern life that await the aimless pedestrian in a shopping mall, or beachcomber by the English shore. Hence we hear the sounds of happy families going shopping; street bands and street musicians; idle chatter; recreational sport by the seaside. Other passing sound events are practically 'textbook' in their familiarity; sea, wind, church bells, bird song, and like that. Everything is edited together in an extremely linear and unadventurous fashion, and while it's probably compressed and time-lapsed in places, it doesn't create an interesting aural soundscape that surprises the listener in any way. Clearly not everyone can scale the heights reached by Chris Watson (see above), but I think we're entitled to ask for a little more than just another field recording disc. A lot of these prosaic works resulted from commissions, from what are clearly very unimaginative regional arts bodies of the UK.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

info@sounding.org.uk
www.sounding.org.uk

Cal Crawford

Sitting on Theories on the Frontier on Extension

USA SQUINT FUCKER PRESS SQUINT OOF CD (2003)

This one seemed intriguing at first spin, but my advice is...don't bother with it. Nine 'mystery' tracks of sounds ranging from the boringly uneventful to the extremely quiet, interspersed with lots and lots of silence, or near-silence. Sound familiar? Well, López and Günter aren't about to give up their careers with this clown throwing his hat into the ring. This conceptual piece is something to do with how difficult it is for a human body to remain completely immobile; Crawford's pursuit of this silly experiment has led him to generate some of the most inert sounds ever laid down onto a CD. To realise this work, Canadian Crawford 'generated sounds by sitting on top of a bundle of blankets with a microphone rolled up into its center', and got further sounds by putting pressure on his microphones, or sticking them in boiling water. Results - dull. There are no textures, no ideas, and most importantly no tension on this record; the use of silence is merely tedious, perplexing and meaningless. Well, admittedly some listeners may derive pleasure from the 'ocean roar' effect of the opening track, or the sensation of walking in the snow suggested by the third cut, but rest of you will probably lose patience swiftly. I know I did. Consider...would you really trust an artist who chooses to call himself 'speech.fake' and publish his work under the imprint of 'Squint Fucker Press'?

ED PINSENT 11-2003

lostmiles@yahoo.com
www.squintfuckerpress.com

Andrew Deutsch

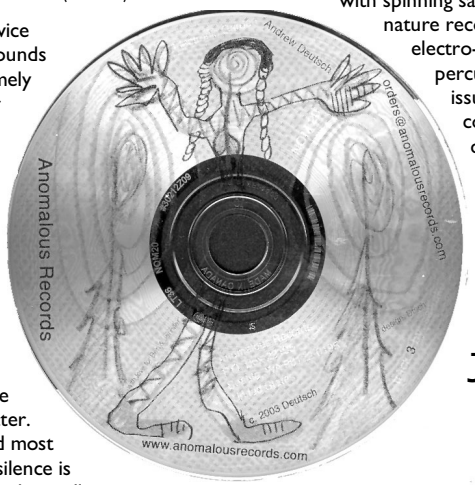
Electronic Garden

USA ANOMALOUS RECORDS NOM20 CD (2003)

An extremely odd and - frankly - surreal record, which appears to combine assorted types of bells, chimes and musical box music with strange field recordings. It's grand, mind-melting stuff which achieves its unsettling effects almost unnoticeably; you can wake up from listening and find that a tree has been grafted to your stomach. Oh, those pesky elves of the forest! This record is far stranger and more compelling even than his (still) excellent 2001 release Field Tracker, which he made with guitarist Tetsu Inoue. Track 1 is a music box in a swamp of frogs croaking to their-selves while gentle Southern rain falls. 2 is cowbells recorded underwater with a snorkeller and two big gongs. A common enough sight, if you know where to look. 3 is another music box, this time with crickets and locusts in a field eating grass, and crows cawing in that field too except they turn out to be children's voices instead of crows. In real terms I suppose there's little difference. Track 4 keeps eluding me. Track 5 is birdsong and wind in the trees with small bells, then further chattering from exotic birds perhaps in a bird sanctuary. Bird sanctuaries should probably be banned. I take this track, beautiful as it is, to be Deutsch's endorsement of that petition.

So far this remains a strange and wonderful sound experience, half-nature, half-music, half-man. Purposeful in a gentle way, Deutsch cultivates his electronic garden with the Socialist certainty of one of the post-(UK) Civil War Diggers tending to the waste land of the United Kingdom. These musical broths are ingeniously-edited constructs, yet they appear natural and perfectly formed. He effects a strange blurring and blending of the elements of nature with the elements of music, and not just a straightforward clash of two divergent soundworlds.

Well, back to my laundry list. 6 - this one is a strangely treated episode which appears to have more electronic components than previous. Things collide, but collide gently, like two bluebottles suspended in a noodle broth. 7 is further treatments, perhaps ring-modulated, certainly unrecognisable and quite radical and extreme in this context. Presumably, other previous recordings are used to 'trigger' these weird and wonky bells and bloopy noises. Analogous to when you run a metal comb over the tastebuds on your tongue. 8 - and last cut I think - the weirdest and final stage of the garden, like the compost-heap that all Englishmen used to keep at the bottom of their gardens. This is a portrait of a washed-out bucket of shingle, with spinning satellites from outer space coming in, bells, chimes and nature recordings all mixed together in a dense, brilliant electro-acoustic blend of greenery, paving stones and percussion instruments. Quite genial. This CD comes issued in a low-key, handmade art print and signed cover, and in his low key hand-made way Deutcsh is quietly causing some quite significant ructions in the fabric of common sense.



ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 22195, Seattle, WA 98122-0195, USA
orders@anomalousrecords.com
www.anomalousrecords.com

JEPH JERMAN CORNER

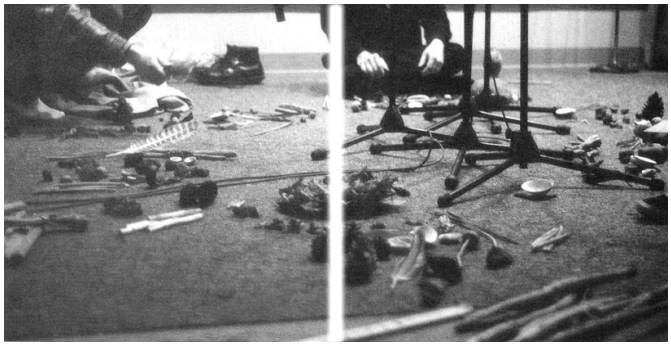
Animist Orchestra

Wuwei

USA ANOMALOUS RECORDS NOM14 CD (2002)

Our old friend Jeph Jerman with one of two new releases. This one is a group effort with the Animist Orchestra, selected friends and collaborators, recorded in the studio, rattling stones, leaves, seashells, sticks, feathers, leaves, nutshells and such; small found objects picked up from nature's bounty. The word 'Animist' here is potentially loaded, and implies that Jerman and co have found (or are looking for) that innate soul that resides in any inanimate object. The Orchestra are, I suppose. not so much playing music as communing with nature. Mostly they're just listening, to the sounds they make, and those of others; do likewise is only advice I can give you. It's certainly brilliantly recorded, and it's been noted before (particularly on The Second Attraction, Jerman's 2001 solo release of this sort of thing) how difficult it is to get these acoustic sounds to register in the recording process. Well, so much for the microphone engineers having a field day - what's in it for you? The only way to make this extremely testing record work for you - assuming you're prepared to give it the time of day in the first place - is to stop doing absolutely everything else, sit down with a glass of water, and devote yourself to listening to it. Get your whole listening-self into a low down position, make yourself as small as these shells and these stones that are on offer on the audible sacrificial altar. When varying sounds eventually emerge and the 'playing' of the orchestra gradually gathers fire, it also gathers weight; it can create a kind of reference point, or series of reference points, that suddenly brings the entire field into three-dimensional relief. You 'see' a huge area of imaginary sonic space open up before you and

there are tiny globules of solid matter dancing inside it, suspended in mid-air. This happens first at around index point 9:00 on the CD and then...erm...carries on in like manner. Shaking, clicking, clinking, knocking...micro-fragmentary, tiny percussive sounds - and that's all there is, but, pointillist-fashion, these sonic atoms may build up and create for you an entire ocean of formless abstraction, a vast force-field devoid of any content or meaning - just pure sound, and a totally factual document (zero processing throughout) of small gestures and human actions. Side one is a long very 'dry' piece - rustly and tinny...where side two somehow seems juicier, as though it had been recorded underwater or near water. I envisage a phalange of overlapping seashells, some with sharp edges, arranged in a long line...or perhaps the scales of an animal, like the lovely Pangolin. Suggestive of shallow stream running over pebbles. Judging by the disparate collection of little aphorisms and anecdotes assembled in the booklet here (some are illuminating, some are a bit smug), Jerman is as much concerned with his philosophy as he is with his music, the zen-inspired thinking that can get him to notice the presence of these overlooked sound-sources in the world in the first place, and the further participatory spirit he's able to induce to get others (including Seattle's Dave Knott, for example) to take part in realising



his visions, activating potentialities and unleashing tiny sounds into the world. Jerman may like to think he himself is a force of nature, such as wind, water, earth, sea or sky, animating these inert objects like a benign deity, and giving them sweet voice.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 22195, Seattle, WA 98122-0195, USA
orders@anomalousrecords.com
www.anomalousrecords.com

Jeph Jerman

Instability studies

USA ANOMALOUS RECORDS NOM21 CD (2003)

Another quite good 'naturist' or 'animist' recording, this time a solo release by Jerman and comprising four recordings of a ceramic sugar bowl. First we hear it 'unplugged' as he fiddles around with the lid of it, attempting with his hands to unleash more than you or I can find in such a simple object; there follow three recordings where he places it on top a vibrating wooden plank, and lets nature take its course. This plank, which he calls a 'shaketable', is connected to a motor that makes it vibrate, and suspended on springs. The resulting tiny noise is close-miked for full effect and delivers puzzling drones, sounds which border on the insane - especially when, for the last track, he makes overdubs of the whole thing. If you enjoy the comforting noise made by your washing machine on spin cycle, then this is the CD for you.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

PO Box 22195, Seattle, WA 98122-0195, USA
orders@anomalousrecords.com
www.anomalousrecords.com

SOUND RESEARCHERS CORNER

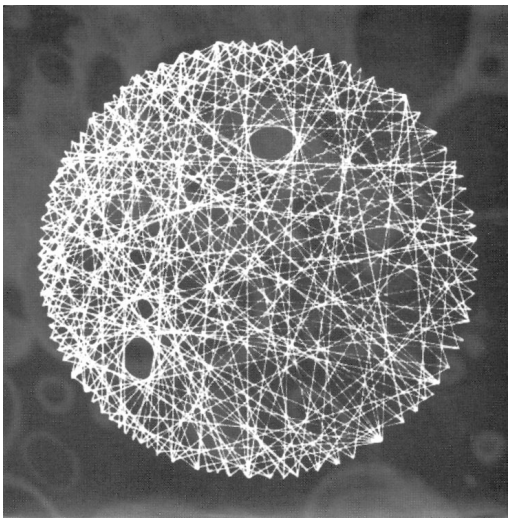
Seth Nehil / Jgrzinich

Confluence

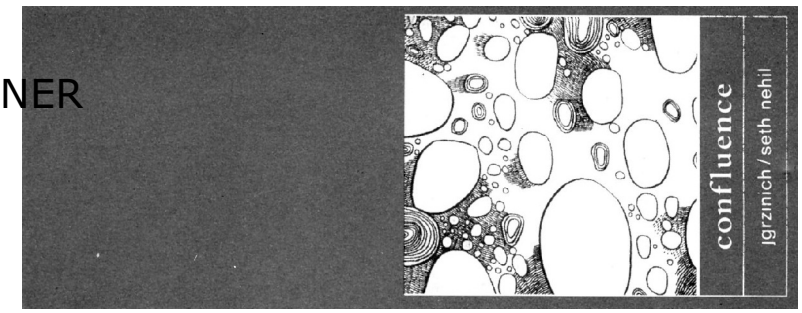
USA INTRANSITIVE RECORDINGS INTO22 CD (2003)

One of two quite remarkable CDs by Seth Nehil and Jgriznich (ie John Grzinich) here. Both have been associated with Michael Northam (interviewed last issue) - all three lived in Austin, Texas in the 1990s, where they were part of the arts collective Orogenetics. Mnortham also collaborated in their live electro-acoustic setup ERG. On available evidence, it seems the three of them inhabit very similar worlds of sound and share this common approach to their work, which if anything is more based around a sort of scientific research into the nature of sound, than anything to do with 'music' as we understand it. The intention of this duo is to 'study evolutionary patterns of sound dynamics'; their detailed notes about the nature of their research are fairly baffling, but the results are certainly encouraging enough to convince even the most sceptical audience that they're onto something. They talk more like scientific observers than like artists, and their defining aesthetic is determined more by curiosity about the mysteries of nature than concerns for conventional beautiful results.

Of the three long tracks here, 'Pneuma' sets the scene with its steady droning and strange rattling, which develops into something that sounds like massed cowbells attached to a herd of goats. Comprising layers of field recordings, it's been composed later in the studio by JG into a pleasing long-form episodic statement. 'The Distant Edge' is quite different, and potentially more interesting - the sounds were captured from a noisy demonstration in Belgrade and combined with some group recordings of the duo, engaged in some form of noise-making activity with some half dozen of their compadres. The demonstration - filled with car horns, shouting and slogans - verges on being a wild event, but here it's simply one more sound event to be clinically observed, picked apart, reassembled and combined with other similar materials, to observe the differences in the fine grain. 'Lohme' is even more successful, assuming you like to hear natural sounds that have been completely denatured and abstracted to the point of infinity. Through this processing, it creates a colossal sense of scale - vertiginous mountains and dizzying canyons of vital, pulsating noise.



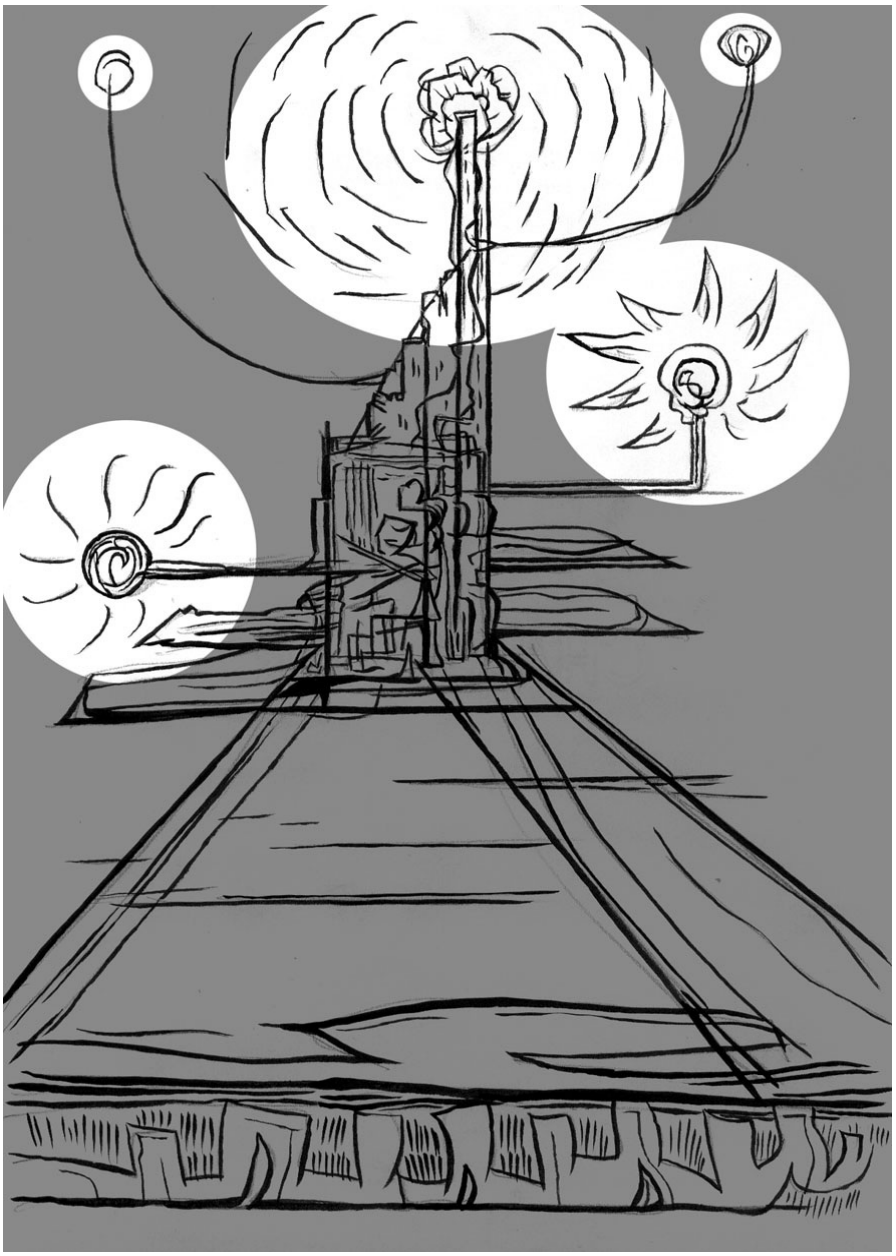
The ongoing 'project' of this duo gathers more force and more meaning as they proceed with it; it's still a bit opaque to me, but from what I can gather their method involves collective noise-making strategies, singly or in groups with willing collaborators, recorded in various set-ups all around the globe. If Michael Northam's descriptions are anything to go by, the abiding aesthetic is one that denies - quite deliberately - any conventional notions of playing improvised music. Instead, they opt for using inert things such as found objects and pieces of string, do it in unusual locations and chosen sites, and deliberately resist the idea of artistic self-expression. Or, in their own words: 'an effort was made to de-emphasise the individual presence, being attentive instead to the collective sound body...' At the same time, they gather interesting field recordings like roaming antiquarians used to collect monoliths, stone circles, hill figures, cathedrals and monasteries. Only much later are these things investigated for their content, and assembled into meaningful juxtapositions in the studio



editing suite. Seth Nehil and Jgriznich take their good old time over this (all the source materials for Confluence were gathered over a two year period) and do it all in a spirit of dialogue and inquiry; I sense few preconceived ideas at work here, and maybe even they're not sure where all this 'research' is leading. For sure, the final results are quite unlike conventional music and quite unlike the usual untreated field-recording CDs that abound in large numbers these days - but convey a real sense of materialism, of hearing things as they actually are. If sound were an organism, these recorded works would appear to be detailed studies of the cell structure of such an organism, and how it tends to behave in different test environments. This might appear rather dry and abstract, but the sounds etched onto this disc are alive, extremely engaging, allowing us to hear the world in a new way.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 3391151, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA
www.intransitiverecordings.com



Seth Nehil / Jgrzinich

Stria

BELGIUM EREWHON CDWHON008 CD (2002)

Stria is intended as a counterpart release to the above CD, and it's a further three excellent examples of their collaborative work. Where the above release gives some clues, this particular Belgian release ensures that the artistic intentions and methods are completely obscured by cryptic, self-regarding texts from the artists and their friend Bethany Wright. My advice is to ignore this side of it and just lose yourself in the chasms of sound which they unleash. From what I can gather, 'Tome Gather' involves several 'group participants', a public library, an art gallery and radio station; ' Arboreal' requires further group participants, and the Resonance Ensemble; while 'The Mirrored Corner' uses wire drones from the Biotope Installation. They drop these hints expecting us to either know what they're referring to, or to alienate us. Bemused? I know I am.

'Tome Gather' might as well be what my fantasy-mind makes of it, a collection of scholars leafing through books in a library and the steady, open-ended humming that hovers out of this record like so much solid ectoplasm is like the emanations from the fervid brain-waves of those many academics. A natural chord floats out of their page-turning activities; heaven knows how many layers of recorded sound were processed into this dense formation. The sound of 'reading', made manifest.

'Arboreal' could be something happening in a forest; at time of writing, England is enjoying (due to global warming, no doubt) one of the mildest Novembers I can remember, allowing dreamy-minded nonces like myself to observe the gorgeous brown and red colours and finding some sort of poetry in the scattered leaves on the pavement. The disconnected crackles and shuffles of this music could well be American artists walking around in such piles of leaves, but that's a wild, uninformed, guess. This track at least is clearly composed, tracing a nice arc of development from quietness to intensity and then sudden subsidence.

'The Mirrored Corner' is the tour de force on this release - 16 minutes of metallic, resonating humming and clearly something like what children imagine that a pylon sounds like if you get too close to one. Not content to start out with a compelling sound, this track soon goes completely bonkers in a quite alarming way - soaring, diving, swooping like some gigantic hawkman attempting to spear you with his long, sharp pike.

Quite good visuals on this release which hint at their pseudo-scientific investigations - inner graphics could be drawings of amoebas or other single-cell organisms. Front cover shows a complicated point-to-point pattern inside a circle, which could represent anything from the movements of sub-atomic particles, to the choreography of a large-scale earthwork art performance piece by their group participants.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

BP 96, 4000 Liege 1, Belgium
erewhon@angelfire.com
www.radiantslab.com/erewhon

The CRACKLING E(S)THER

fennesz
Aleph
Cremaster

Guerra
Suchy

Tennis
Loam

Pure
Fibrillation

Mattin

Parlane
Matthews

Hecker

Vainio

Beequeen

ELECTRONIC ★MUSIC ★

TAMP 'EM UP SOLID WITH A HARD-WIRING MAN!

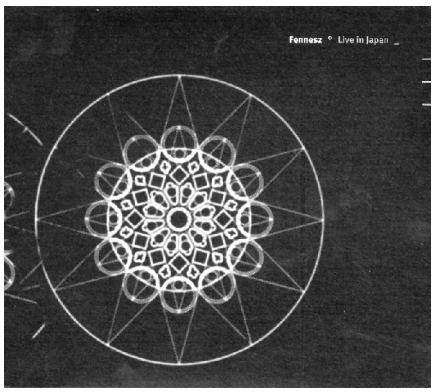
Fennesz

Live in Japan

UNITED KINGDOM / JAPAN DAT / HEADZ DAT-1 / HEADZ 10 CD (2003)

Another deliriously enjoyable piece of music from this great electronica 'superstar'. Last issue the compilation Field Recordings persuaded me that Fennesz was somehow at his best with short, snappy tracks of fizzing sampladelica, and that maybe underneath it all he was a frustrated popstar releasing 2-minute singles of abstract pop-noise, and dreaming of Phil Spector and Brian Wilson production values as he gazed into the one-dimensional portal of his laptop screen. Given that there is apparently a semi-serious ambition to make live pop guitar music with Hazard and Philip Jeck, this perception may not be wide of the mark. However, this live in Japan excursion - one single 40 minute piece - perhaps shows another side to CF, his ambition to replicate the sound and feel of an excessive 1970s progressive rock artist. The music here isn't that far away from Focus, Tangerine Dream and Bill Nelson (of all people!) all jamming together in some 1970s supergroup of soft-core popular progressive noodling. There's a lot of acoustic guitar samples here, reminding us of CF's original chosen instrument, and perhaps hinting at his buried desire to return to frustrated dreams of guitar hero-dom not far removed from the solo excursions of William Nelson and Be-Bop Deluxe. (We should be grateful that Nelson, who has notched up not a few excessive and pointless solo studio recordings in his time, never purchased a laptop - although that luxury item may be on his shopping list as we speak). Fennesz's guitar work is limited to very basic, simplistic and tasteful chordal strums, which accompany the more familiar layered, filtered, distressed and abstracted slabs of digital noise that are one of his signatures. Here he exhibits more skill than before in applying his filters, effects and treatments, yet the overall sound remains determinedly pleasant to the ear. The last 10-15 minutes of this live work (he usually comes to life at the end of a performance, in my experience) achieve the kind of droning meltdown orgasmic high that most musicians would give their right arm for.

In the end, the complexity of this work (if any) resides mainly in the sound - the sonic treatments which grow increasingly rich, unpredictable and filled with micro-dynamic events that the ear will strain to catch; certainly there is little real complexity in the simple guitar chords which change into simple electronic chords via laptop alchemy, nor in the incredibly basic and utterly linear compositional structures. Hence the progressive rock comparisons, which I feel have a little justification. The mysterious coda at end of CD is extremely good though, and more 'experimental' in some way...like an additional 10 minutes of bonus art material. Angular and unpredictable sounds jut out of a strange carcass and give that edge of danger so absent from the proceeding deliriously pleasurable but fundamentally unchallenging



preceding 35 minutes. And all this is structured around a rich vibraphone sample that is sheer magic! A co-production between Touch and this Japanese label, this release boasts superior sound quality, Japanese packaging with obi, and Jon Wozencroft sleeve design. All of which is a bit like flying to Japan and seeing a red telephone kiosk in the street in Tokyo.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

19-5 #206 Udagawacho Shibuya Tokyo 150-0042 Japan
info@faderbyheadz.com
www.faderbyheadz.com

Hecker

Sun Pandemonium

AUSTRIA MEGO 044 CD (2003)

One of the better Mego releases I've heard for a while and one that can serve to introduce newcomers to the shock-and-awe tactics of the Mego folks. Sometimes people have to be thrown into the deep end of Mego if they're to develop the proper respect and appreciation for the digital electronic malarkey this label engages in and this recording is sure to have most people drowning in a whirlpool of cheeky puerile noises and twitterings. The early track 'Stocha Acid Zlook' is the highlight by a long distance but can be turbulent though the ongoing background drone holds everything together and directs it into a continuous but stable spiralling system. From chaos arises order and the order feeds chaos. Later tracks retain a playfulness but the pace is steady and the various chirpings and snippets of texture and sound form an orderly queue. We have a bit of a breakout in 'Vi Retrospect' but Florian Hecker quickly brings his sonic runaways under control and the track has a regular pace underneath the little bursts of noise. Overall this recording is more bark than bite and if this is Mego / Hecker's idea of 'pandemonium', it's a fairly well-behaved one: the tapestry of noise has clarity and direction and each part can be savoured to the full.

The real worth of Sun Pandemonium will probably be realised when it's handed over to the likes of Kevin Drumm and KK Null among others for remixing into some truly intimidating soundscapes. I can already see the parade of illustrious noisemeisters lining up to do a remix version of this CD - no I'm not privy to any secret information about Mego's plans but we can start saving the pennies anyway.

JENNIFER HOR

www.mego.at

Various Artists

Bip-Hop Generation [v.6]

FRANCE BIP-HOP BLEEP 19 CD (2002)

This is the last in the first series of albums put together by French label Bip-Hop to showcase the world of modern electronica. Bringing together both those artists with solo albums on the label and those operating elsewhere, it is designed as an introduction to the range of material being produced. Fans of this series will no doubt be glad to know that a second is in the pipeline, although it looks like the next may be of a more abstract nature than the first. This CD like the others in the series features six artists, some better known than others, with a reasonably diverse range of material being covered.

Proceedings get underway gently with Lucky Kitchen founders Alejandra Salinas and Aeron Bergman; two people one wouldn't normally associate with the likes of Bip-Hop. They are artists of an entirely more concrète nature than the label usually features. All credit to them then for having these two first up. What they conceive is a dreamy soundscape affair with environmental noise seeping through the cracks from time to time. It makes for an intriguing listen with a lovely laid back kind of feel (well what do you expect coming from Spain), only helped by the guitar that floats in and out. In many ways this is the most complex piece here and possibly a pointer towards the territory of the second 'Generation' series.

Following this are a couple of tracks from Scanner, the sort of things you imagine he could probably produce in his sleep. They're well produced and sound great, all well and good you say. At the same time that is exactly their problem: they lack a sense that any risks are being taken and they don' t really leave any strong impression other than a feeling of vague nostalgia. He might be the biggest name on the CD but unfortunately it doesn't show.

Only slightly more interesting is Bittonic. Again these tracks feel as if they are the product of a mindset that seems to place technical excellence ahead of actually having anything to say and they come off a little cold. It is a matter of slight interest then that Iris Garrelfs (for this is how she of the Bittonic moniker is named) co-organises the London based Sprawl event along with Si-cut.db, another lower case Bip-Hopster.

The person who probably gets most mileage from this album is one half of Pan sonic, Ilpo

Väisänen. He gets three tracks here solo, and also another in collaboration with Schneider TM as Angel later on. Having heard the latest solo outing by Väisänen's Pan sonic partner Mika Vainio recently it's not too difficult to hear who is bringing what to that particular table once you've heard these tracks. Whereas Vainio shows a tendency to dispense with rhythm and produce more abstract, dark pieces, Väisänen plays his beats pretty much straight ahead and possibly because of that comes out just a little less interesting in comparison.

After the flying Finn comes Battery Operated, a Canadian / French / French-Canadian outfit who are new on me. They produce quirky little numbers full of samples that build to produce complex rhythms teetering on the edge of danceability. An interesting approach, not entirely new, but definitely a road less travelled and it pays off. I don' t know if I could cope with an album' s worth of material like it but they manage to produce happy, interesting music in a reasonably original way.

The CD ends up in a very different place than it started out from with the last track by Angel. This is loud, dirty, improvised techno that lets it all hang out and doesn't care in the slightest if anybody minds. It's not polite and all the better for being that way. A complete contrast from the opener and yet strangely I like them both, each in their own special way.

The first Generation series from Bip-Hop has been well received and it' s not too difficult to see exactly why. As a whole they're well produced documents (if a little light on information) and they provide a nice introduction to various electronic artists, especially for people like me who are probably not naturally drawn to much of Bip-Hop's roster. With the next series moving in a slightly different direction it remains to be seen whether an audience that has been enthusiastic so far will make the move with them, although it would be a shame to think that they wouldn't.

AARON ROBERTSON

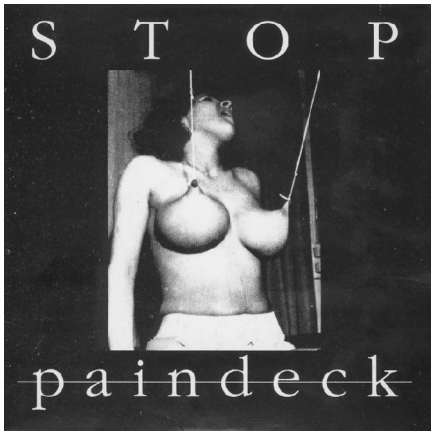
B.P 64, 13192 Marseille, Cedex 20, France
mailto:ip@bip-hop.com
www.bip-hop.com

Stop

Paindeck

POLAND SIMPLE LOGIC RECORDS
SIMLOG 005 CD-R (ND)

Pretty far-out Polish electronic nonsense genius, which may be a solo turn by a nonsensical electronic genius Pole. Impossible to find out any facts about Paindeck. Depraved sex sleeve art and overall style of musical delivery (bleak and strange) may hark back to 'glorious' Nurse With Wound days of 1980s, and some hepcats would not have been surprised if LP version of this had turned up on United Dairies. But relentlessly good it be; of the eight tracks on offer (named with short sequences of letters from alphabet) only one or two of the nuggets fail to catch fire. First is an effective artillery assault built out of tape loops, a rotating nightmare piano phrase, and scattered noise air-shots, all of which above events are cleverly 'dubbed' on a mixing desk. It works as good insect repellent. Fifth track is a powerful sucking vacuum beast, pulling

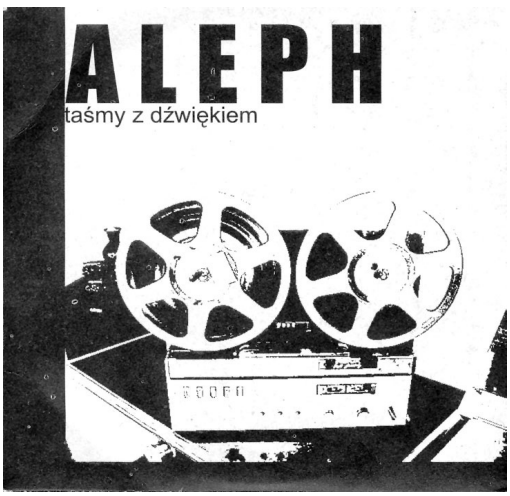


unwary pilgrims in to epicentre of its large, echoing stomach, wherein intestinal roars buffet ye. A fine Medieval death. Bosch, H approves of it.

4th cut is a glitchy hybrid mosquito-man, but miles away from the 1990s Cologne school of antiseptic digital perfection, this dirty clutch of rhythms grows ever more insane like an entire typing pool working overtime on 25 very noisy, super-fast electric typewriters. When's the coffee break, Doris? 3rd and 6th tracks are 98% field recordings, or use elements of same to send you mad as a stick while you sit there guessing what is going on; 3rd is mostly just perplexing and head-scratchy, while 6th uses traffic sounds, unseen clunking and clanking in background, and a cloud of ominous black crows overhead - into midst of which a brief snatch of organ pipe tune plays. Why? By time you've figured it out, you still yet have major delight of long 7th track to suck up through your brain-straw, one which starts of with strange lines of stuttering electronic linearity which build up into a loopy geometric grid until a dense melange of notional projections hems you in and straps you to iron bed. Very dynamic exploration into abstract realms unknown. Then final cut unleashes a bagful of humming blue monsters, who do their best to drown out the anthemic hymn tune which is cut to pieces on the editing board and roars out in broken bursts. Surreal Polish head-medicine at its finest. Obscure as anything and worthy of your immediate investigation.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

simlog@hot.pl
www.simlog.republika.pl



Aleph

taśmy z dźwiękiem

POLAND SIMPLE LOGIC RECORDS
SIMLOG 004 CD-R (ND)

Further droney and slightly doomy Polish guff, puked out from same label, not unskilled in its execution and through its mystery it causes an old analogue tape deck to breath flames like a scaly dragon ripped from medieval bestiary. Fine resonating tape-generated gloops, meanderings across the deep-sea bed in search of minerals and precious stones; very textural music (in the same way that being dragged through a bed of thistles is pretty fucking textural), filled with stark high-contrast explosions as intense as the blacks on tenth-generation photocopies, and almost ceremonial in its perverse, long-faced solemnity. Throbbing, echoing, abstract and totally meaningless sea-scapes pouring headlong out of the singular, tortured, fervid brain of an unknown Pole. Over 7 tracks and LP length, not a single wrong foot is placed on ladder of destiny; of my favourites, I plump for 'Dzwieki z Tasmy' which is pure 1950s outer-space sci-fi soundtrack materials, but tinged with brilliantly pessimistic undercurrent - as though watching old black and white grainy footage of Yuri Gagarin in his space capsule, and suddenly everything goes wrong, like maybe he's eaten alive by blue alien monsters, riddled with space dust or ejected prematurely into the stratosphere by faulty Russian hardware. One in the eye for you, Dimitri! 'Dziwne Sny' is second favourite to lugs of present scribe, the moodiest and longest track, and with its nagging repetitious loops and groaning atmospheres, it induces a fever-dream in the cerebellum; while the oscillating tapes sounds like hammered gongs lull you to sleep, the layers of dagger-stabbing backwards tapes won't let you rest. Prescription recommended. Limited pressing 100 CD-Rs only. Small art object.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

simlog@hot.pl
www.simlog.republika.pl

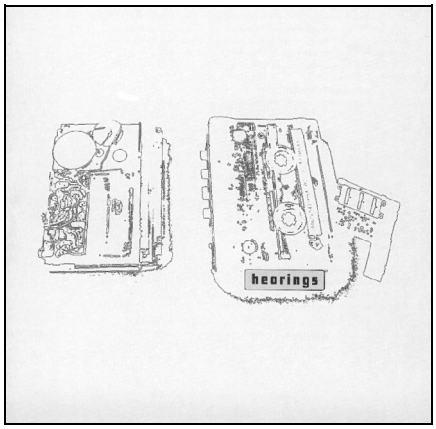
Various Artists

Hearings

AUSTRIA TRANSCOUSTIC RESEARCH
TRES 001 CD (2003)

At some time in the not so distant future it is entirely possible that some stuffy academic types, whose job it is to alert us to such things, may look back on the history of music and note the existence of not two but three Viennese schools. The first two I shall not go into, confined as they are to ancient history already. The third however may be being created even as I speak: a new school of electro-freaks going about their nutty ways in the Austrian capital in between cups of coffee and reading the newspaper. For starters you could include the MEGO crew, follow them with the likes of Farmersmanual et al, and bringing up the rear could be this bunch of social misfits, a loose collective based around the Freudian sounding Institute for Transacoustic Research. Et voila! One school of electro-perversity do they maketh.

Hearings, the title of this CD, is also apparently the moniker given to events organised by the good people of said institute, designed to present experiments and projects displaying a



transacoustic character and at the same time to mediate these to an interested audience. Now I don't know about you but that sounds like they're taking the proverbial to me. What I think they're really trying to tell us is that they make some weird sounds from time to time, and if they can get anyone along to listen then that's nice as well. There's nothing wrong with embracing reality from time to time; to misquote somebody, 'shut up and play yer laptop', or as the case may be here, yer coffee machine, or yer vegetable.

One of the distinguishing features of this CD is that many, but not all, of the artists here are involved in generating sonic possibilities from fairly mundane everyday objects, much in the manner of some nouveau musique concrète. I would have to admit that this is also one of the things that helps set it apart for me from its contemporaries, being as I am from an old-school that draws a certain aesthetic satisfaction from putting a mic in front of something and rolling tape, rather than fiddling about with some irritating computer algorithm.

Amongst the many items that are poked and prodded here in the name of research, transacoustic research no less you'll remember, are a Jews Harp, a coffee machine, neon lights, a Gameboy and best of all, some leeks. The track featuring these underestimated relatives of the onion is appropriately enough by the Vegetable Orchestra, which has a solo album out on the same label ('Automate') where they manage to abuse all manner of vegetables in the name of interpreting contemporary music with organic means. From this description you could be mistaken for thinking that it's all work and no play at the institute, the boys (and girls?) involved spending all their days delving into the furthest corners of the arcane nature of sound. Nothing could be further from the truth however. There is a heavy dose of rhythm running throughout the CD, for a good number of the tracks it forms a framework on which to hang the far-out sounds that have been carefully gleaned from overlooked sources.

Maybe it is the apparent Dadaist influence that leaves you with the lingering thought that this compilation may just be somebody's idea of a huge art joke, these merry Viennese pranksters wetting themselves at the thought of people taking all this stuff seriously. As an ironic post-modern comment on the state of modern music this CD could work equally well. But then again it could just as equally be for real. I'm sure there really are people out there who can imagine the Jews Harp as a prosthesis for communication and apparatus of discourse, or who can perform Kraftwerk covers on a load of vegetables and still take themselves very seriously. This isn't to say that this is not an enjoyable listen, because it is very much so. It is this same sense of anti-art play that manages to bring a wry smile to this jaded face and makes me want to hear more in future from the various parties involved. Play on!

AARON ROBERTSON

Theresianumgasse 35, A-1040 Vienna, Austria
iftaf@iftaf.org
www.transacoustic-research.com

Anthony Guerra

Spool [#2]

UNITED KINGDOM
TWOTHOUSANDAND 2++5 CD (2003)

Not an unpleasant listen, but not a great deal is happening here on these five unnamed tracks, apart from maybe the third one. This long episode (21 minutes) was edited down from a live improvisation that Mr Guerra performed on Australian radio. From modest beginnings not far removed from scratchy short-wave imitations, it evolves (slowly) into some pretty good heavy-action droning electro with diffuse, kosmische-styled keyboard melodies wrought in a minor key on the top. Edgar Froese wouldn't have been too ashamed to have turned in a day's work at the studio like this one (if he could get anywhere near the mixing desk with that fat stomach of his, that is). Through it all Guerra maintains his concentration fairly well, only wobbling once or twice on the hairline tightrope, as he folds in all the obligatory clicking and fizzing effects you find in modern electronica, which they use to produce that slightly 'distressed' surface. The remainder of the CD disappoints though, not quite matching the energy and intensity of that 3rd live track, and offering merely a few lukewarm bowls of whiney laptop soup with a side-salad of chopped-up soundfiles; and far too much 'automatic' gestural white noise for my liking, the aural equivalent of a mindless doodle. This is 2nd solo work from Sydney-born Guerra and was realised using contact mics, pedal samplers and electronic effects to boost the sound of an electric guitar, plus lumps of wood, metal, cables and other junk producing a web of feedback and noises, which is subsequently composed into pleasing arrangements by Guerra at the editing suite.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

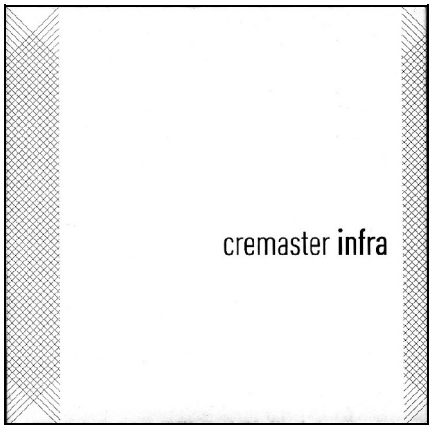
4 Old Castle Street, London E1 7NT, UK
www.twothousandand.com

Cremaster

23 November 2002

UNITED KINGDOM SOUND 323 323(3)
3" CD (2003)

One of two new releases by this Barcelonian duo, whose extreme take on quiet, minimal improvised electronic music is espoused and supported to some extent by English improviser Mark Wastell, and he recorded this single 20-minute escapade at his Sound 323 shop in 2002. This release is the equivalent of a lone sock flopping around sadly in the tumble drier - that's not at all how it sounds, but exactly how it feels. The duo - Alfredo Costa Monteiro with his



'objects on electric guitar' and Ferran Fages with his feedback and mixing desk - generate light hissing, crackling, high-pitched squeals and gentle creaking without any apparent rhyme or reason, attempting to give the impression that they're sustaining an intensely concentrated mood between themselves. Apparently they would rather do this than play anything remotely resembling music, or project any shared, genuine emotions to the listener. No tunes, no rhythm, and (most importantly) no passion; but there are plenty of alien, unnatural textures. After about ten minutes of enduring this ersatz malarkey, I decided to turn the volume way up, and found it does become vaguely more interesting - at least that way you can sense the lines traced by the forest of twigs they are attempting to construct around you, as though you were a starling and they were gigantic mother birds building a nest. No denying their serious intent - they met because they shared a common interest in 'researching noise', and have evolved non-musical methods that pare down their sound to the barest possible equation, eschewing the more common tools such as loops, effects pedals or pre-recorded tapes. That discipline is commendable, but my reservations about lack of emotional commitment persist. On evidence of this, these clowns strike me as two nerdy hobbyists staying at home with a miniature train set that doesn't actually work, but they spend hours playing with it anyway. Bless 'em.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.sound323.com

Cremaster

Infra

GREECE ANTIFROST AFRO 2015 CD (2003)

Much, much better than the above, and strong enough to make me want to revise my prior opinion even! (How fickle I be.) There's more going on in this studio recording than there is in the average sex life of any given hetero couple in Richmond, not that that's saying much...the two Spaniards Fages and Monteiro go (virtually) wild here, using their wayward guitar pickups, their feedback mixing board (maybe it's a Ouija board), and their foreign objects draped across electric guitar in crazy ways that send sane men mad, yet at end of day cannot conceal the stern, frowning aspect that we expect from severe, cruel Spaniards. It's as colourful as free jazz, yet as dark as Goya. Four totally abstract acorns of music-stroke-noise, of which the opening salvo delivers

reams of tiny fizzing bubbles in a small barrel while a thunderstorm brews in background, as though someone had discovered that drinking champagne adversely affects the weather. Not that this grim, severe music is really good cause for breaking out the bubbly. Maybe some coarse, inexpensive Spanish brandy would hit the mark better. The harsh and mean treatment of sound (and of your exposed ears) is like two young sadists abusing the breasts of a woman by stroking them with wire wool. Yowch. Sorry I wrote that, but it's true. But keep listening for further evidence of the bite and aggression that Cremaster are capable of, drawing a wide range of sonic tortures - none remotely 'musical', in sense as defined by the Michelin guide - from deliberately very limited range of equipment (but not cheap equipment). 2nd cut comes up for appraisal, here be something strangely chattering (like a mad talking ape) which evolves into an insane morse code message sent from Hell, transmitted along endless telegraph wires while the battle for the Somme rages in the background. And a big raincloud, coloured black, which sucks in electric raindrops, forming on the horizon. Starting to get rather alarmed here. Need more than an umbrella to protect me from these dangerous elements.

Stark clarity is foremost with this release; no hiding behind a cloak of distortion for these vicious surgeons of death. A scary single-mindedness guides them, i'faith. Perhaps Creamster are two half-mad control freaks / serial killers who function best in the sterile studio, where every last outpouring from minimal instrumentation can be tweaked to ultimate degree by captive engineer, provided they feed him enough coffee and little blue pills. They're starting from zero, almost. But it's so alive, so vital in its galvanic performance. Precision of their playing - if you can call it that, as both appear to have totally rethought what it means to be 'playing an instrument' in the first place - is inhumanly clean, each action deliberate and considered. Not a single sound is dirty or distorted; even that occasional muffled effect you hear is probably deliberate, as though the duo had already learned how to muffle their scuzzy electric outpourings, as surely as a classical guitarist is able to muffle his nylon strings with tips of calloused fingers to generate the necessary dynamics. Likewise the improvisational interplay between this duo is, perhaps, basic at best - you get simple contrasts, such as high notes against low notes, quick playing against slow drones, and like that, but how devilishly effective it be. Their music can skip along as playfully as Puck dancing across a sylvian glade, even as it leaves a contrail of tense, high-pitched noise in its wake that is extremely painful for the listener to endure. But well worth enduring! Recorded by Bernat Romaní (who has, naturally, since committed suicide) in the 'Laboratorio de Sonido de Metronom' in Barcelona. A harsh antisocial burst from Antifrost, a release that's capable of wrecking lives.

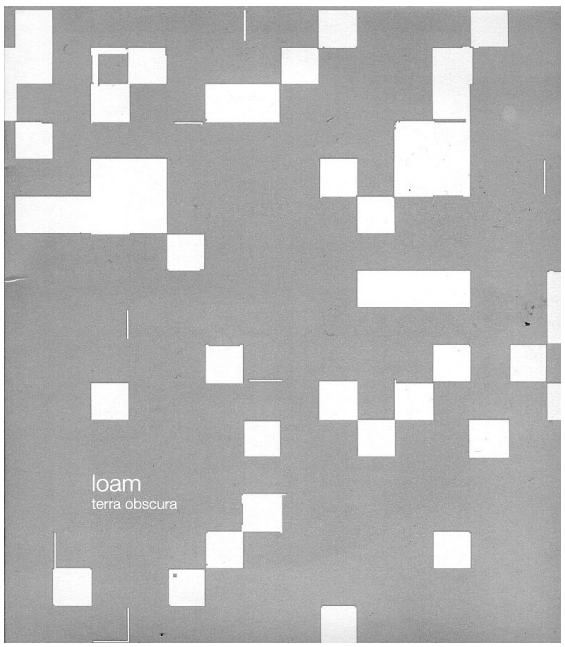
ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.antifrost.gr

Mattin / Rosy Parlane

Agur

GREECE ABSURD #26 CD-R (2003)



A 20-minute live recording from this duo, taken from the 'Oligarch Shit Transfusion' in Autumn 2002, if that means anything to anyone...I'm surprised at how compelling this little sliver is, considering there's barely anything happening. Working within an extremely limited range of actions and sounds, so limited as to be as constricted as an inmate in a straitjacket, the duo are doing heaven knows what - it may not even be realised with electronics. But it probably is. They start out (as many players of same ilk do) quiet and imperceptible. Click-click-click. Whine-whine-whine. The air is charged with tension from the get-go. The audience must have sensed something interesting was gonna happen - either a fist-fight or a budgerigar exhibition - and put down their glasses of lemonade for a better listen. You can hear animal instincts at large - ears pricked up, hairs rising along back of spine. They must have been transfixed by the curious, circular movements of Mattin and Parlane on stage, because you can't hear a pin drop the minute the first electronic whine is unleashed into the air. Midway point, and I hear something like large elastic bands being stretched and heated over a Bunsen burner; they howl in agony like large hornets. The pair finish up with an engaging cluster of activities and thumpy-bonking noises that suggests their computers or machines or whatever are actually just big cardboard boxes, and, like playful children, they just climbed inside them and pretend to be robots on stage. What a winner. Ever since he first took the world by storm around the mid 1990s, young Antipodean Cossack Rosy Parlane (who had the very first issue on the famous Sigma label in 1997) has been refining his mode of electronic simpleton music to - this. Mattin by contrast is a vicious no-nonsense Basque, living in London, who in between bouts of knife-throwing has brought his laptop into collaborative situations with Parlane and Eddie Prévost at Richard Sanderson's Baggage Reclaim venue. Another Absurd (of Greece) record - in a slim package that's barely noticeable with inserts printed on clear plastic whose lettering you need a powerful microscope to discern. How I love the 21st century.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

PO Box 63752, 15203 Vrilissia, Attiki, Greece
absurd@otenet.gr
www.anet.gr/absurd

Loam

Terra Obscura

USA TOPSCORE TS007 CD (2003)

Straight out of Milwaukee comes Loam, aka Jim Warchol, formerly of mid-nineties indie rockers Sometime Sweet Susan, who seem to have been named after a 1974 porn movie although strangely no-one mentions it. This is his second full length release for Topscore, he's also contributed to a compilation on the same label and had a few mp3-only releases on virtual label Stasisfield. Starting his solo career using samplers and drum machines he seems to have moved in a more musique concrète direction, altering sound from various sources on a laptop (haven't they all). The CD comes in an unappealing aquamarine oversize cardboard sleeve which caused me to leave it on the shelf an awfully long time before forcing myself to get down to business.

The first few tracks I could easily live without, being as they are just a little too reminiscent of some half-remembered, bad club experience. By far the best of this early bunch is 'L@dy in my life' (yes it really is spelt that way), which happens to be comprised entirely of samples from Michael Jackson's 'The Lady in my Life', off his classic 'Thriller'. When you have material like that to start from you would think you couldn't go wrong, but Warchol still manages to turn in something a little less than fully satisfying. Is it only me that wonders what Jackson would think of somebody sampling the bejesus out of one of his songs and then not doing a particularly good job of disguising it?

After this less than auspicious start come a couple of shorter tracks which seem to be afterthoughts of sound which don't add anything to the album's overall direction. The first of these 'Dtsk' sounds like someone having a high old time fiddling with the fast-forward control on a video, the other 'Drpr' (notice a theme?) Warchol notes 'is almost like a glitchy alarm clock or something'. Crazy. The track sandwiched between these two which sees Loam in somewhat better form is 'Long min (Live)', a track based on a sound art piece done in conjunction with a local sculptor. It starts off all electro-blips and settles into a López-like low rumble of sound.

The last three tracks on the album are where you feel Warchol hits his stride. They're all ambient uplifting sort of grooves that wouldn't disgrace any chill-out album, nothing too challenging, and they chug away quite pleasantly in the background. A little bizarrelythe penultimate track is named after Arsenal defender Sol Campbell Warchol possibly revealing an Anglophone side to his nature, describing him as 'stellar' A nice moment comes via a Chilean review which, when retranslated back into English, reduces poor Sol to a mere 'Sun'. Who says nothing is lost.

There is something that seems quintessentially American about this album. It's hard to put a finger on, but maybe it's the lack of self-doubt that many on the other side of the Atlantic seem to exude in spades that makes this CD partly what it is: a tad uneven, and something that probably could have been better than it turned out to be. The accompanying press does nothing to dispel this feeling, confidently claiming that this CD '\'85brims with life and a spectrum of emotions'.Mmmmm.

Warchol is apparently quite political nowadays, at least judged by his own website where he maintains a diary of his own thoughts and ramblings complete with ads for Democrat candidate Howard Dean and exhortations to vote for the man. One of the mp3 tracks Warchol released last year on Stasisfield, 'Meditations (on ashKroft)', uses samples from the US attorney-general's self-penned patriotic anthem 'Let the Eagles Soar', which amazingly his staff are apparently obliged to learn by heart and be ready to sing at the drop of a stormtrooper's hat. So you can't blame the man for at least having his heart in the right place. What is a little surprising is that the US government haven't yet found links between Warchol and al-Qaida.

AARON ROBERTSON

loam@topscoreusa.com
www.topscoreusa.com

Pure

Noonbugs

AUSTRIA MEGO 030 CD (2002)

Pure is Peter Votova, who's been a big 'noise' on the Vienna scene since the 1990s, worked there mainly as a DJ and organiser of considerable numbers of events / concerts / evenings of hedonistic techno racket. Also finds time for numerous side projects (Ilsa Gold) and running his own label in Austria; his connection with Mego allowed him to pursue these more 'artistic' releases, of which this is only the second solo project by this name he's done for them (the first was mini-disc The End of Vinyl, made up of samples from run-out grooves on vinyl records - see issue 8 of TSP). Noonbugs is a shade more musical than that, with plenty of low notes, drones, whining pitches and strange noises, and comprises 8 suites stitched together from about 2 years' worth of live and studio recordings, fed into the computer's hard drive, edited with help of his buddy Martin Siewert, and issued in an abstract sleeve depicting what looks like a cosmic, fractal space storm. It's also - let's face it - very boring. A slack 'dark ambient' record, a fact which even the label releasing it feels compelled to admit, in shamefaced way. Promising enough opening, I'll grant you, with its long and steady droning episode that's almost industrial in its intensity - it leads the listener down a long metallic time-tunnel of the mind, with no light at either end of it. I felt promising vistas would be sure to open up from this point onward, but thereafter my interest began to wane. Despite a few highlights in remaining 7 tracks, it feels increasingly like the accompaniment to an awfully dull science-fiction story, filled with bleak and desolate landscapes...track 6 is an electronic swamp full of murk, insects and lumbering beasts, while track 7 suggests a long prison sentence on 'Planet Hell', a zone where cosmonauts go to die or expire in peace. By track 8, when the final destination is reached, it turns out to be clouded with a poisonous atmosphere - listener is by now asking, why did I ever join the Astro Corps? Well, none of this is to deny Pure's technical gifts, since the production and polish of the work is up to the highest digital standards on offer in today's keyboard equipment showrooms. But so what? I suppose the vaguely sinister bent of the work is bound to have its followers; maybe the intention of creator to impart this restless sensation, and certainly Noonbugs is not comforting or reassuring in any way. This gloom may be caused by the vague, uncertain melodies which, if they could ever resolve themselves, might be pitched in a threatening minor key; or by the turgid (some would say stately) progress of the musical voyage from one end of eternity to the other. At one point I was reminded of an ELP bootleg, only with the Keith Emerson moog solos taken at zero mph - not a pleasant prospect, is it? It's hard to square the image of Votova as fun-loving DJ and 'rave' organiser with this dull and dreary ambient music, and its dystopian, bleak image of the future.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

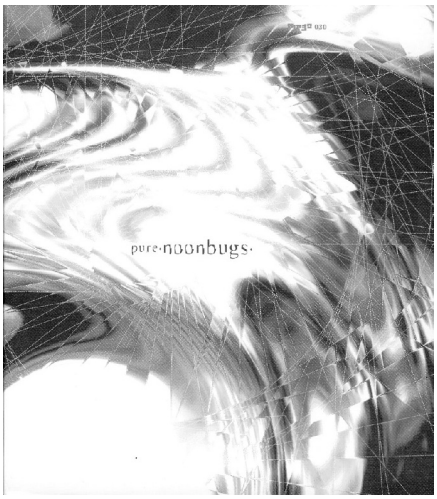
www.mego.at

Joseph Suchy

Calabi.Yau

GERMANY STAUBGOLD 43 CD (2003)

Another extremely entertaining and rewarding feast of robust electro-guitar pyrotechnix from the reliable solo turn Suchy. I note that some listeners hate this guy. Why? Technically he is something of a wizard - perhaps a kind of latter-day Todd Rundgren? - in way he uses studio effects judiciously to enhance his considerable playing and arranging talents, and out of it all he produces a hybrid resembling a kind of souped-up Krautrock. Yes, the best of Faust, Neu!, Can and Kluster are all here in a handy-dandy package. Always enjoyable, sometimes even sublime...he can attain moments where the ecstatic layers of harmonies, ersatz voices and electronic droning all fit together into the most perfect celestial effects. This release is somewhat more mellow and reflective than his previous noisy outings Entskidoo or Smi2le, and even includes not a few pastoral interludes where Suchy regales us with pleasant Spanish guitar strummings and pluckings. With the assistance of Stephanie Tiersch on a dispassionate dream-like vocal, and Stephan Barnickel on percussion. With a fun absurdist prose-poem printed on back, and a restrained package featuring a female astronaut on front cover, in her helmet and space suit,



sucking down a tube of space-gloop...sexual connotations indeed, more underplayed than Massimo's effort this issue, but also denote the kind of free-form floating weightlessness and cocoon-like envelope that Suchy's music delivers here. Another altruistic release from Staubgold.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Agrippinaufer 6, D-50678, Koln, Germany
welcome@staubgold.com
www.staubgold.com

Mika Vainio

In the Land of the Blind One-Eyed is King

UNITED KINGDOM TOUCH TO:54 CD (2003)

Mika Vainio gets around quite a bit it would seem, both conceptually and geographically. In the past few years he has gone from living in his native Finland to London, Barcelona and now Berlin. This, his third solo outing for Touch was recorded in the latter two cities and forgive me if I think it shows. Maybe I'm leaning on racial stereotypes, but you do get the very real impression that this album is a balance between electronic precision and human warmth (guess which feature goes with which city). The same can't be said for many like it. Possibly it is because Vainio is such a good capturer of sonic environments that he has, consciously or unconsciously, imprinted the very atmosphere itself of the cities he has been resident in on to these tracks.

Of course Vainio is better known as one half of Pan sonic (the missing vowel a sordid tale of tale of corporate greed to be sure) who have made quite a name for themselves specialising in a minimal line of techno. Cut lose to pursue his own dark muse he drops the rhythmic propulsion that is central to the Pan sonic sound and produces a much more abstract collection of soundscapes. It takes a while to get into, but once you are there it is admittedly quite a nice place to be.

What is immediately apparent is that there is a sense of clarity that pervades almost everything here. Vainio is not afraid to patch together seemingly disparate elements and let near-silence separate them. Indeed several of the tracks seem to come together almost as if by chance and yet they still manage to hang together in a cohesive

enough fashion. He takes this course of action for the majority of the CD and whilst at first it sounds a little like he can't make up his mind, after a few listens you start to perceive the method behind his madness. This is especially true of tracks like 'It is Existing' ('Se On Olemassa' in Finnish for all the completists), 'Ahriman', and the endearingly titled 'He was a Sound Sometimes' ('Han Oli Aani Joskus', curse these people with a non Indo-European language).

The other method that Vainio uses to construct his aural imaginings is represented by the two drone pieces 'Colour of Plants' ('Kasvien Vari') and 'Snowblind' ('Lumisokea'), not to be confused with the Sabbath song of the same name we can presume. These two are probably the highlights of the CD for me, although that is not to take away anything from the others. What separates these two tracks from the rest is precisely what I find the others lack, and that is something that runs throughout the piece to provide an obvious point of reference. I really must get around to not taking the easy option one of these days.

Taken as a whole it's a challenging listen, but one that pays rewards given the chance. Strangely, given the angry burst of white noise in the short opener, the CD never again threatens anything too aggressive, but is instead happy to suggest and hint at slightly menacing scenarios; many of the pieces here have an obvious filmic quality to them that makes for an overall unsettling feel to the album. The only real complaint I can find myself able to muster is that it all passes by just a little too quickly. I can almost certainly count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I have said that about an album but here it seems warranted, and it is probably to Vainio' s credit that he resisted the urge to overdo things.

There's a Jarmusch film, Night on Earth,(with a soundtrack by Tom Waits) which does quite a nice job of capturing what is easily imagined to be the essence of the Finnish character: a distant melancholy framed by an acute (if tangential) sense of humour. Both of those elements are at play here although possibly the former more so than the latter. This vague sense of loss and longing is at work from the start and nothing seems to sum this up better than the picture on the inside cover of the CD: an airport lounge full of people staring out onto an empty runway.

AARON ROBERTSON

13 Osward Rd, London, SW17 7SS, U.K.
web@touchmusic.org.uk
www.touchmusic.org.uk

Kaffe Matthews

CD eb + flo

UNITED KINGDOM ANNETTE WORKS AWCD0005-6 2 x CD (2003)

A generous package - two entire CDs of processed sound by Kaffe Matthews, the UK's most single-minded female solo improviser, generated (as are all the CDs in this alphabetical series of hers) through conversion of electronic and acoustic information in a live setting. This time she does it with a theremin as well, but the difference is that it's been reprocessed (fairly extensively, I would guess) in the comfort of her home studio. Two banal observations I might make at outset - one is that it's much less raucous than her previous lively outings, which I personally regret, having fond memories of those rude and rough recordings; and two is that it's clear the young lady has discovered the delights (and press accolades) of Japanese minimalism. While CD Eb is filled with variety and original ideas, there's no denying there is more than a tip of the trilby to, say, Toshimaru Nokamaru. And CD Flo is, in places, almost a carbon copy of Ryoji Ikeda's click and cut approach, and his sound. These minor reservations aside, there's nigh-on two hours of listening delight in store here.

The first CD provides excellent 'pure' electronics, but mostly doing only one thing at a time - it's rather linear - whines, followed by drones, then mangled groans seeping out of a pair of electric lips in a rather miserable way. Sometimes the music lumbers and thumps about like a heavy-footed bear - other times it sings like a rare golden eagle descending from Mars. Between these thin attenuated whines and the heavy bass drones (real speaker-rattlers I might add!) there are a few foreign elements brought in (or perhaps surviving from the live tapes) - birdsong and field recordings on 'For Mama',

shortwave radio on 'To A Landing'. Second CD is pretty much more of the same, apart from the early tracks (in particular 'Corner' and 'Mni') where as I say, I hear a blatantly derivative copy of Ryoji Ikeda. Convincingly done, but where is the distinctive voice of her own which we all know she has? Thankfully 'In The Dust' is somewhat more maximal, and exhibits the protean, instant-metamorphosis you can only get from the hard-disc editing suite - moving from clicks to sherbert fizzes to highly compressed bass moans, like trolls forced into an underground cellar until their faces squash up.

This is a set of extremely abstract music, and virtually everything is so relentlessly processed that it's like being wrapped inside a styrofoam playhouse - though entertaining, it's also kind of airless. In each case the live performance is in there somewhere, but having been taken into captivity on Kaffe's hard drive, and carried safely back to her home studio in a string bag, all the colour has subsequently been drained from its cheeks, leaving a ghostly pallid husk behind. Imagine an artwork that started as a very busy 4B pencil drawing on cartridge paper, all vigorous strokes and gestural sweeps, which the artist then spent hours erasing with a putty rubber. (And yes, I know there's a piece of American minimal art just like that). This is pure electric sound for its own sake, length linear trundling or basic crescendoes lined up in patterns, but done so with no small amount of intelligence.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Unit 61, 8 Andrews Road, London E8 4QN, UK
annetteworks@stalk.net
www.annetteworks.com

Tennis

Furlines

FRANCE BIP-HOP BLEEP 20/21 2 x CD (2002)

At first glance there is something decidedly unusual about an electronic outfit like Tennis producing an album whose overriding concept advocates a return to nature, the notion of which is such a minefield of philosophical debate that it doesn't bear thinking about. Placed in a bigger picture of art finding inspiration in the natural world, this CD could almost be seen as the latest example of a tradition that goes way back in the day. Whereas Beethoven wrote his Pastoral symphony in praise of a world he looked back at a little too romantically, these tracks smack of our boys emerging from the studio after a hard sesh' to partake of some electric puha in the forest out the back, then going back in to record their observations.

There is more than a touch of dub-fuelled downbeat happening here, not such a bad thing for an act coming from the click and cut side of the house. For one thing it helps to make this an album of electronica that won't leave you out in the cold. Rather, it invites you in to put your feet up and take a pew on the sofa all snug and warm. Feelin' nice! The eight tracks here are all themed somewhat strangely after furry (hence the title) woodland animals, and the accompanying soundtracks conjure up their mammalian others with varying degrees of success.

'Inedible Doormouse' is a slow start and is the smallest of the tracks in every way, its combination of pops, washes and bass thump never given time to really take off. Things start to get more skanky on 'Bat 2 Far', the Hammond-like keys in the background providing a nice circular melody to keep things rolling in a comfortable fashion. By track three, 'Vole Shapes', we are well immersed in Tennis's smooth electro-dub world. One speculates what The Upsetter himself would make of all the glitches and electronic clickery. His mind may well be set at rest by both 'Pine Martin Eden' and 'Otter Story' which are the two highlights here. The first starting out all spacey before being propelled by a nice if almost conventional house beat underneath layers of heaviness, the latter taking your by now world-weary mind to the outer limits of consciousness with its washy echo and heartbeat riddum. 'Badger Tracks' is the most visually evocative of the bunch; you can almost see this cheeky fellow scurrying about in the undergrowth before your eyes. Of course I spent ages looking for a 'hidden' fox track that I was sure must be in here somewhere but to no avail. Seems like it would the obvious choice but there you go.

All in all a reasonably pleasurable, rounded outing from Messrs Benford and Edwards (alias Si-cut.db and Benge respectively), the two solo artists who combine to form Tennis. It's a little strange to these ears then why the aptly named Bip-Hop label should choose to include an additional CD of remixes of Tennis's previous album Europe on Horseback with it. So much of the aesthetic of this sort of neo-minimalist music seems to say 'less is more', from the ubiquitous lower-case

typography to the reduced sonic materials with which these artists work, that it seems odd that they should produce a package which smacks of excess. There is something mentioned about celebrating the fact that this is their 20th CD in two years of existence, a feat to be proud of for sure, but 'Furlines' stands so well as a document on its own that you wonder why they couldn't celebrate with a separate album in the manner of their excellent 'Bip-Hop Generation' series.

Still, here it be, with no less than fifteen electro-maniacs getting their digits on tracks from Europe on Horseback. What in the main this goes to prove is that Tennis have a lot of cool friends: Taylor Deupree, Warmdesk, Kim Cascone, Scanner, Bittonic, Pimmon, Bovine Life; they're all here and then some. Not surprisingly some of them turn in multiple versions of many of the same tracks. Taylor Deupree remixes 'Self-Seal Mishap' as an airy cloud mass of sound, while Tim Hecker makes the same an ominous, almost gothic outing. This track also gets the treatment from Cray who let his electro-mice out to chew their way through the original, and Bovine Life produces an ad for a futurist Mothercare. French wiz-kid Electronicat makes a good old fashioned knees-up of 'Contube Alomany', while Pimmon turns it into a jittery ping-pong match and in the hands of C K Dexter Haven it is all glitchy-squiggles that never go anywhere. And so it goes on. And on.

In actuality it is quite a varied set, enough that it doesn't get boring to hear the same track done over again. In most cases you would struggle to tell this is the case. It may just be a case of too many cooks spoiling the binary broth or too many electro-chiefs…Things do seem a little out of hand when the bonus CD is longer than the one it is meant to accompany. Something for all the Tennis completists out there methinks. On the other hand, it may be just the trick to have on in the background at your next dinner party full of Fashionistas. Don't tell me there ain't no silver lining!

AARON ROBERTSON

BP 64, 13192 Marseille Cedex 20, France
ip@bip-hop.com
www.bip-hop.com

Mattin

Gora

UNITED KINGDOM
TWOTHOUSANDAND 2++7 CD (2003)

Four live tracks of computer feedback here on this consumer purchasable which will occupy about 30 minutes of your recreational time. In return, you get reasonably entertaining electronic noise for your dollar, although the performances (or perhaps the way it's edited) come in fits and starts...too many pauses, false starts, longish embarrassing gaps, which means the punchy impact of the work isn't really sustained for long enough. But this may be the whole point, defying our expectations for the reassuring continuum of sound and leaving us to deal with the void. There are indeed a few passages of pretty good stormy and bellowing computer noise (which, even though performed in uncontrolled live setting, still has that 'clean' surface which marks it as wholly digital in origin); they say that musicians have truly 'arrived' when they can do noise well. (Nobody says that, really.) The remainder of Gora is pretty ordinary sequence-y electronica

sludge, which just dribbles out of Mattin's laptop like so much stale carrot juice, to be sucked up by docile bunnies with big straws in their mouths. Taken from four different live festivals in 2001 and 2002 in Europe and London; the last cut features guest jamming from Rosy Parlane and Julien Ottavi. Fair.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

4 Old Castle Street, London E1 7NT, UK
www.twothousandand.com

Beequeen

A touch of brimstone

THE NETHERLANDS KORM PLASTICS KP 3011 CD (2002)

Beequeen intended this collection as an anniversary release, with some choice snippets compiled from their vast archive, although it's actually a year or so late to mark the real occasion. Let's hope we're not seeing the start of another Muslimgauze syndrome here, but we've cause to be grateful for this round-up of oddities and rarities - some unreleased, some swiped from obscure and hard-to-find comps. The duo are Frans de Waard and Freek Kinkelaar and as with many de Waard-related 'projects' I've ignored Beequeen for years mostly on a matter of principle, but now have revised my opinion somewhat...this collection is not half bad, an enjoyable collection of 10 rich and fruity plum-cake fully electronic drones, mostly with an

undercurrent of something evil, dark, or generally diabolical lurking at the substructure. It would be overpainting the situation to describe this as a 'satanic' electronic-werk, although the title track from 1995 hints at an appearance from the lower realms and might indeed make a useful background noise for while you're performing a ceremony to summon up 'Old Nick'. Then there's the anti-religion track 'Rainhas des Abelhas', compiled from the very first Beequeen album of 1989. The satirical text here (a snide send-up of the Catholic liturgy) was provided by contributor Dennis Cooper as it turns out, although the backwards tapes here do create a real sense of soul-sapping unease. Further tracks - for example the four cuts taken from their soundtrack to the Metamorphazen film from 1991 - evoke a kind of mournful, slow musical shrieking. I'm tempted to start seeing lyrical, orange-drenched visions of the damned slowly burning in a fiery hell. But mostly these two experimenters refuse interpretations of these abstract works, get on with the job of composing their semi-ambient, highly melodic rich drones for the sake of doing it, and aren't afraid to use the reliable electronic effects like echo, flange and distortion in a way that stops short of excessive; I think 'opulent' would be a more fitting word. Music for a high-gloss repainted Bosch musical hell. This comp comes with a full list of their releases to date, ditto for their contributions to compilations; lots of fuzzy photos of them doing their droney thang with guitars, synths and pedals; plus a few fatuous stories and anecdotes provided by a coterie of smug insider friends. For instance, you can read the story of how Freek first met Edward Ka-Spel of The Legendary Pink Dots in 1987, and squirm. But one should not sneer, as that doggedly underground UK combo were a big inspiration to Beequeen.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 11453, 1001GL, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.staalplaat.com

Various Artists

Or MD COMP.

UNITED KINGDOM OR JUST 13 CD (2003)

I have to admit that when I last had a chance to see Farmersmanual play I walked out as they were about to kick there laptops into action, my head having been pummelled by two hours of electroacoustic heaviness by Parmegiani and Christian Calon, my aural receptors in no fit state to start comprehending anything remotely new. I also seem to dimly recall that as we rapidly approached l'heure du crime the words 'last tube' were being bandied about by certain people with increased urgency. So I gave in and left them to it. The abiding memory I have of catching a glimpse at their computers as I left was a screen that had something resembling a giant flowchart on it, small boxes connected by straight lines in a seemingly haphazard fashion.

Maybe it's a good job that I did leave early or in my sonic dementia I may have acted a little like the Sheffield nutters captured so well on the track with the endearing title 'fm+3*.-sheffield-mic-1 98', the stand out of this CD for its humour value alone. I would suggest that they may have had a slightly easier reception at the I.C.A where my aforementioned walking

out took place. The other three tracks that Farmersmanual have on this compilation album from the Touch offshoot are entitled variously 'kTXt-1.sinemerge2', 'kTXt-3.6r4.in' and 'kTXt-2.MD3.txt', each one of which could have been one of the robots that Luke Skywalker chose not to buy from the Jawas. And who ever spared a thought for them? Possibly even worse than walking out on Farmersmanual was missing Francisco López's gig in the same series. I did even try to reschedule a trip to Paris so as to ensure my blindfolded presence but to no avail. He is represented here with a piece that sounds positively busy by his own standards, all electronic chirping behind which what sounds like a seascape ebbs and flows.

This is definitely a CD of two halves, the first twelve tracks being roughly 'quiet' and the last twelve 'noisy'. Rounding out the 'quiet' half are the U.K. duo Shirttrax with seven very short pieces based on their previous Or release 'Good News About Space', and Gescom providing two tracks that look like they have been taking advice on writing titles from Farmersmanual. The Shirttrax pieces I could honestly live quite easily without, small high-frequency moments and miniscule blips that don't really go anywhere nor do anything. Gescom prove more promising, their first track 'PN-1.3.15' (can these people not spell?) a big, fluttering, discordant wash of sound that enfolds you within its digital arms, the second 'YXJ440M' a small spiralling thing that sounds like you're headed straight down the plug hole.

You certainly know when you hit the noisy side of this CD, with the Incapacitants subjecting you to an almost excruciating ten minutes of 'Annoying KANAE'. At last a title I can relate to! This track is certainly designed to do your head in, a true bombast of noise and feedback that doesn't let up. Toward the end Donald Duck, strung out on speed, turns up to make a rare guest vocal appearance, and then suddenly it's gone. Much less exciting but is wunderkind Florian Hecker who doesn't excite with the eight small electro-studies he presents here. Things thankfully get back to the business with old hands Merzbow and Polish world traveller Zbignew Karkowski turning in a grinding aural assault which seems to offer no escape from its grasp, continuing relentlessly apace for a seemingly very long period of time only to get even louder at the end. A real sculptural block of sound, to be expected from Akita's predilections and Karkowski's assertion that the only man who ever taught him anything was Xenakis. Things are rounded out by a couple of the Farmersmanual tracks mentioned earlier, the memory of the Sheffield nutters also providing the cover image for this CD.

A mixed bag of electro-extremism, although on closer examination much of it really isn't too extreme at all, this CD seems to have been in production for an awfully long period of time. Originally slated as a minidisc release it seems to have been set in motion way back in the twentieth century, when I guess minidiscs where a lot less popular and possibly had more cachet with the tech-head set. After much fuss here it be, revealed, in all its slightly tainted digipack glory. Not half bad but not much more than half good either I'm afraid.

AARON ROBERTSON

13 Osward Rd, London, SW17 7SS, U.K.
info@itsaor.net

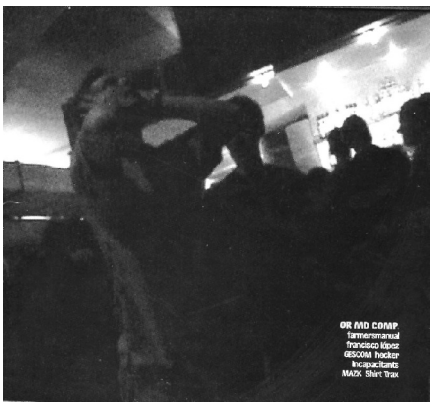
www.itsaor.net

Eric Goldd / T B Egg

Through the range of the exposed parts, the stimulated glance rebounds of the one with the other

AUSTRALIA REALISTIC! 01 3" CD (2003)

An 'electrifying' mini-CD from these 2 Australian gazoonies, both of whom are taking a holiday from the larger improvising ensemble Dworzec. Playing together as a duo for the first time, they let rip with some fairly wild, semi-formless dynamics, even if the actual sounds they make aren't wildly inventive; there's the familiar language of electronica in their fizzes, clicks, rattles, roars and such like. Their battling-top styled music proceeds at exciting urgent pace (the first track does, anyway) and in places this duo give Mego a run for their money...I wonder if they should try and make a real full-on, go-for-broke noise LP in the 'old' tradition, in which case they might be pretty hard to beat. It's a live recording, using the electric guitar of one of the players reprocessed in real time by the other



guy; well worth comparing their approach to Cremaster to see how different folks get totally different results from using similar materials. Goldd and Egg are pseudonyms for Arek Gulbenkoglu and Antony Eagle; look out for second release on this new label, Lovers by Geyana Dancey.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

realistic_prodns@yahoo.com.au

Orange Eye

Riding Through the Pink Fabric

KABUKIKORE KKCD35 CD-R (2003)

Here's another no-budget release, CD-R in a sleeve that's clearly emerged from an Epson home printer, but it's by no means a no-brainer. Eight tracks of decidedly oddball electronica, a combination of real-time playing with fragmented samples and totally fractured rhythms. Orange Eye are so good at doing the latter that they practically lay bare the 'art' of making a loop or a breakbeat; on 'proper' records, I think the aim is to make these breakbeats as seamless as possible, while our friends here conversely go out of the way to do the opposite, calling attention to the artifice of this clumsy device. All this creates a mildly disorienting effect (unless it's just the red wine talking) - I see fuzzy melting images, distorting mirrors, a treacherous floor that leaves me wobbly on my feet. Maybe this record is a 'crazy house' of sound, but one that has rather a sombre tone behind the yoks. The third cut 'Kingstone 12 Tuffie' is clearly a deconstructed reggae record that is put through said 'crazy house' treatment, but to rather pointless effect. 'Cord' is more successful, with its strangely alien groaning pitched against a sweet melodic pattern of notes. With its sometimes crude, upfront sound (the bass guitar is particularly impolite), its deliberately lumbering lumpen rhythms, and distinctly oblique approach to the genre, this record is part-entertainment, part baffler, part inconsequential joke. Doesn't always connect with this listener, but it is a genuine 'underground' artefact that you may wish to seek out.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.kabukikore.net

Various Artists

Room 106

JAPAN CIRQUE CQCD-006 CD (2003)

Two 'uniform' volumes so far discovered in this series of themed electronica records. They express interest in 'room music', 'furniture music' or what you will - both these compiled by one Yoshihiro Hanno, the label is Japanese, and featured artists are either Japanese or French - a winning combination usually, as you'll know if you ever tried Coq au vin with Sushi on the side. In keeping with the 'interiority' of this room theme, all track titles describe assorted accessories and furnishings for the home, such as 'Round shaped green chair made of resin' or 'Drawer full of socks in different colours', evoking something of a 'designer' slant such that you could be reading an Ikea catalogue instead of liner notes...they could use this as an avant-soundtrack for one of the many 'home improvement' lifestyle shows on BBC, and I still wouldn't watch any of them except at gunpoint. I intend to describe one of these discs and make the assumption that second comp contains pretty much more of the same. The same roster of artists appears on both but the second one also invites Carl Stone from the USA.

This disc impresses firstly by its 'presence', its sheer range of dynamic frequencies, its digital effects, and its exceptionally sharp sound quality as rendered on this high-quality pressing. Put more bluntly, it sounds fucking good. Most of the contents work quite well musically too, and Room 106 is recommended to anyone who wants a delve into unusual and innovative approaches to electronic music-making. Do I really mean innovative? A lot of these youngsters use very familiar methods, like laptops and editing suites. But maybe the innovation lies in the way they combine elements, and bring new methods to bear. Let's get down to cases. Dorine_Muraille (Julien Loquet) turns in a chaotic, but quietly effective mish-mash of cut-up acoustic instruments - guitar is audible in among the clicks and chops. Chimes and vibrates in a very mad way; barely coherent. Shinsei and Regressive Audio deal in 'distressed' sounds, like faked old photographs; a goodly droning is pitched against a distorted electro-beat. One case where title is descriptive - portrays tropical fish fighting in a tank.

O. Lamm posits some decentred humming and notes placed within an oddly-scattered range, interrupted by the speaking voices of children. Extremely bizarre. It builds up into a sort of nursery rhyme or children's song, in tricky way. Another software user, but he builds his own software and wants to be a pop musician. Eater is actually Katsuki Kagawa, and is as boring as Jean Michel Jarre. Ignore him. Erik Minkkinen is one half of Discom, and he's another lover of chaos, presumably computer-generated chaos. Sounds are twisted, beats are jumbled. His work is very busy. Fluid, jetstream, bubblings. Aoki Takamasa is likewise hyperactive; a pounding beat sounds almost determined, like a man on the march. Paper parcels of noise are crumpled and crimped, and arranged neatly in front of a shimmering backdrop composed of grunts. Oddly enough it evokes a kind of 'hoppy' dancing feel.

Yoshihiro Hanno is the curator of this comp. His music folds in on itself, gloopy blip-blop dollops of sound suggesting a baker making lovely sweets and pastries. Dough, toffee and red sauce all combine among the digital bleeps and beats. Minifer is Mehdi Hercberg. He has two tracks on this CD. The first one is more like sound-art compared to other contributions - he deals in sheer noise, voices, obvious edits and cuts, hissing and what-not arranged into restless, seething layers. Highly fragmented, textural and timbral malarkey. Some lowest-note on the harmonium playing. Minifer sits in the darkest corner of the room. His second cut reveals a cello - played in real time or more likely sampled - that's as big as the side of a house. It seems to be played in an small airport terminal while a few puzzled passengers make remarks on what's happening. Minifer is about the most interesting guy here to my taste, and I will report back if his work on the other comp is good too.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

cirque@pics.co.jp
www.cirque.cd/

Ian Epps

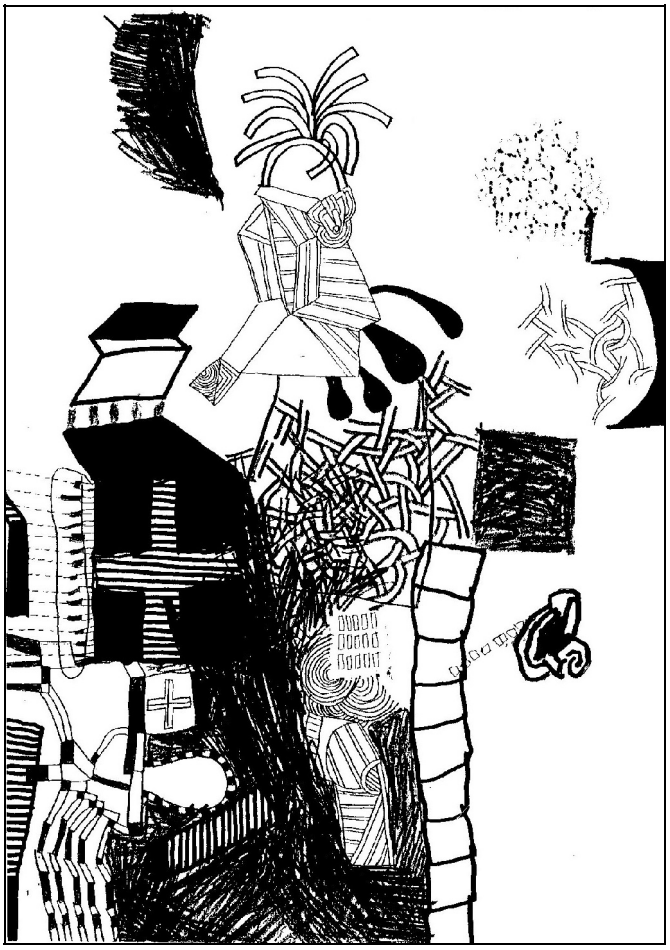
finds the4yearoldchild Courtside, Volume 1

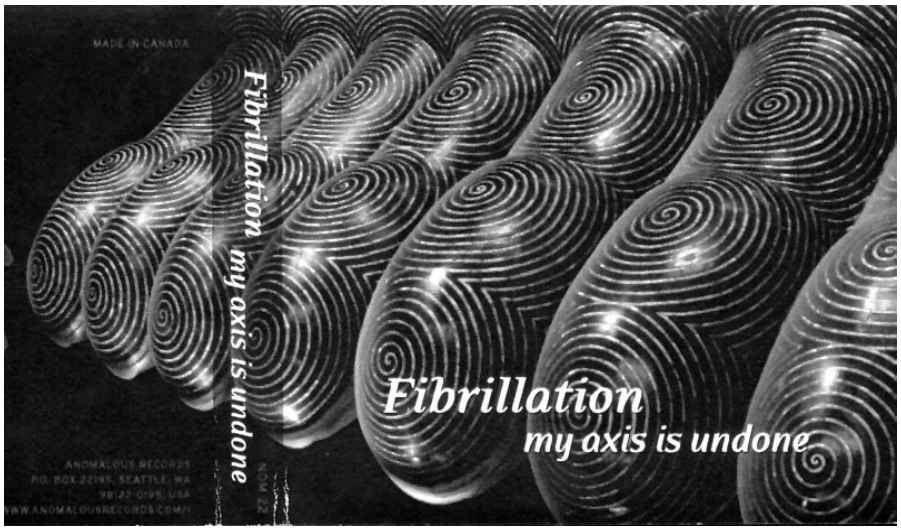
GERMANY SOFTLMUSIC SOM 301 CD (2003)

A genuinely 'nice' record - may appear too 'charming' for those who want more grit in their diet, but the beguiling work of this Brooklyn-based musician will win you over if you bend an ear to it and give it time. True, about 40-50% of the sounds verge on being clichéd electronica mush, but the remainder is fairly original in its construction, simple in intent, and genuinely moving in effect. Epps is attempting to render a child's view of everything, to rekindle the mind and perceptions of a child in his own corporeal psyche, and transmit same to us as listeners. By Jiminy, he nearly succeeds. He uses a lot of 'stuttering' effects, semi-distressed and filtered electronic sounds leaking out of a 'straining' device to build some sort of mosaic pattern; this might replicate the fragmented understanding we have as children, connecting one blurred sensation after another in a chain of bemused perceptions. These stutters are placed against charming drone effects, which pass on that warm feeling of security that the child enjoys, knowing Mummy is never far away. In all, could be said to be a very sympathetic approach to the subject. Epps proposes 'building blocks' of sound. These blocks can be used, he thinks, to create a fictional identity. He wants to create an audio portrait of the child within; The4yearoldchild is the title he gives to this ongoing series of audio portraits. 'Humans are complex filtering machines,' is Epps' personal view of homo sapiens; perhaps he means to return us all to a time when we were less concerned about filtering out experiences (as we all do in adult life), and more receptive to filtering everything in.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.softlmusic.com





Fibrillation

My Axis is Undone

USA ANOMALOUS RECORDS NOM22 3" CD (2003)

Very decent piece of solo art electronica - heavy sounds melded with half-masked environmental recordings, all wrapped in a mysterious and intriguing piece of packaging by John Hubbard. Nothing is overly-processed and there is a strong sense of import, moment and movement behind each short exploration (it's only a 20-minute CD). The titles suggest exotic and foreign lands beyond the seas, alien worlds, and access points which are difficult to negotiate; but as the hero of the piece proclaims, his 'axis is undone', meaning his is a physical body not governed by the normal laws of space and time, and he will prevail. Adrift in the cosmos he freely roams, following neither longitude nor latitude, nor obeying the rules of gravity. A studied and considered set of dynamic compositions. Very dense and satisfying, in spite of short length; he packs more ideas into his allotted time than most.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 22195, Seattle, WA
98122-0195, USA
orders@anomalousrecords.com
www.anomalousrecords.com

Tart

Bring in The Admiral

USA SWILL RADIO 022 VINYL LP (2002)

Scott Foust with Karla Borecky and Graham Lambkin, the main man behind The Shadow Ring. Electronic synth music realised and performed by committed radicals, each instrumental carefully selected and edited. You can always be sure of getting the concentrated best when you listen to these choice cuts; Foust has 40 minutes of vinyl with which to communicate, and he won't waste a single second of it. 'Sailor's Story' starts off the LP, a throbbing and fizzing shuffle produced from the distressed whining of analogue synths, all placed within the suspended jelly of a lightly distorted field of tension. A 'maritime' flavour to the piece that almost 'themes' the rest of the record, and this one is certainly something This Heat would have been proud of. A disciplined, muscular, workout. 'Right Now!' comes crashing in with a frightening urgency - the alarming thumping of hideous machinery, set against crushed voices. This grotesque chaotic noise alternates with tape-edited vocals, a woman's voice, rendered into syllables in pure Lettrist style, to deliver a pointed but unintelligible message. A short statement, but concentrated. 'Emergency' is a mesmerising sequenced loop of electronic sound with carefully applied phasing effects; a long track, it's a tightly controlled statement of worrying, doomy predictions, alluding to an emergency in the state of the world. Though possessed of a raw beauty, there's no disguising the mortal terror that lurks at the core of this piece, yet this terror is nothing like the sort of crass overstatement you might associate with more bombastic, industrial styled horror-noise from the 1980s. 'Emergency' will probably turn out to be a key to understanding this record. 'Great Sadness in an Italian Restaurant' is another miniature, a dazzling compound of spikiness and alienation; dynamic organ drones support a very minimal guitar (?) figure. The precision of directed thought is evident, even in short tracks like this.

'Two Great Kings' - spread over two tracks, this continues at start of side two. No doubt the title sneers heavily at Blair and Bush, those two politically inept clowns who are busy amusing themselves wrecking the world. Sarcasm informs the heavily-treated voices (or voice-like electronics) which hum and whoop like baby cartoon elephants on this track, bleating with insouciance against an increasingly paranoid throbbing backdrop. It's as though the complacency of the two kings, who dream of getting away scot free, is being overtaken by disastrous events. Another very directed dose of energy and thought, shining like a laser beam; another key track to unlocking this record. The two kings continue their gibberish moanings on side two, while an electronic simulation of ocean waves cascade around them. Lambkin's poetic preoccupation with the ocean has recurred on numerous Shadow Ring and related releases. Clearly the futile kings are now beleaguered, sitting like King Canute facing the waves. The music fizzles out in entropic fashion, symbolising the ignoble end of the grand project of these deluded kings. From here, remainder of LP turns seriously nasty. 'Bring in The Admiral' is a layered combination of buzzing, chattering and sawing synth sounds that is guaranteed to induce unrest and tension in the listener; if you can stay still listening to this, it's only because you've been chained in your armchair. This music literally 'shakes' you out of your torpor, leads to a sharpening of your questioning facilities and passes on a greater awareness of your surroundings. Musically, it's also the most outstanding performance here - perfect dynamics and interplay, using very strong sounds, and the players never once relax their concentration. 'Secret' ends the LP with a piece that sounds like it's being performed in an underground mine, while workers chip at the rock face. The trio interplay of a wailing synth, a machine-like quacking sound, and noisy constipated electronics-mangling creates a compelling horrible beauty. Tart display a starkness and rigour in their playing that is rare in music performance these days.

'For twenty years,' declares Foust in his latest newsletter, 'I have possessed the theoretical philtre which enables me to decode almost any event, even if I pay absolutely no attention to the publicity circus that passes for "news"'. His music requires a similar 'decoding' process. Scott Foust has a particular ingenuity for encoding his severely critical political diatribes within instrumental music; his discontent and acuity of thought is fermented and made manifest in these condensed musical statements, which also stand up as great music in their own right. I still can't fathom out why he is not held in the same high regard as say, Mark E Smith in this county.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

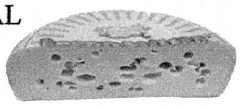
PO Box 9401, North Amherst, MA 01059-9401, USA
www.anti-naturals.org

ED PINSENT - HARLEY RICHARDSON
MYSTERY DICK

One Note Mind
Beautiful organ and feedback drone, splattered with bursts of violent amplifier & delay interaction.
CD(R) - £6 (incl post)
INCREDIBLE LO-FI RECORDINGS FROM OUR ARCHIVES
Cheques (payable to H Richardson) to BM Bemused, London WC1N 3XX, UK
Info and other releases: www.mysterydick.com

PINSENT - RICHARDSON - SAVAGE PENCIL
ATTACK WAVE PESTREPELLER
The Cruel Sea
Improv battle between Pestrepeller and the Chelsea Madrigal Group, Our wildest recording yet!
CD(R) - £6 (incl post)

ALSO AVAILABLE
NOISES FOR THE LIMB - A TRIBUTE TO THE BONZO DOG BAND (feat. Pestrepeller's version of 'Noises for the Leg'). Buy from www.woodrecords.com

CHEESES INTERNATIONAL
BCM Cheese, London WC1N 3XX
steve.cheeses@btinternet.com
0794 666 0528


Beck/Hession/Thomas the three b's CD-r £4
Brownsierra congestion charged CD-r £5
Con-Dom & The Grey Wolves many are called LP £9
Crawl Unit stop listening CD £8
Dieter Muh tertium organum LP £10
Fckn Bstrds slampampers LP £8
The Grey Wolves blood and sand CD £10
Howl In The Typewriter grand theft audio CD £6
Z. Karkowski hear CD-r £6
Knifeladder organic traces CD £10
K2 metal dysplasia CD £7
Andrew Liles aural anagram CD £10
Macronympha membranes and blackholes CD £10
Daniel Menche the face of vehemence CD £8
Mnem for delta relics CD £10
Nord abstract moon CD-r £6
Onomatopoeia a marble holder from andover CD £5
Genesis P-orridge & Z'ev direction ov travel CD £10
Putrefier simulated vapours LP £8
Christian Renou fragments & articluations CD £8
Small Cruel Party stain on pure glass LP £10
The Sound Projector 10th to 12th issues @ £6
Milovan Srdenovic live at the pack horse CD £3
Sudden Infant sidewalk social scientist LP £10
Whitehouse bird seed/cruise/erector etc. CD's @ £10
Postage in the UK CD: free LP: £1 each.
Cheques etc. payable to S.Fricker.
Ask for our full catalogue with many more titles & reviews.

KEITH ROWE

This issue there are five new CDs featuring his playing, one of them (Ajar) filed elsewhere since for that one he was outnumbered by Japanese players. I could also report back of his glowing success at the LMC Festival 2003, if I wasn't so embittered by two things which made me sulk like a teenager that weekend - one, missing MIMEO at the Serpentine art gallery (apparently a fantastic two-hour workout that was like witnessing fireworks cascading and exploding in slow motion) and two, being treated like a 'special needs' person by upstart cloth-eared youngster staffer at the Place Theatre in London. If you were there, you will know which pimple-faced toad I am referring to. Rowe and Otomo Yoshihide were charged this year with large-scale conduction tasks involving all the available talent that showed up, musicians, dancers, and more besides. Rowe's was for the most part very successful, despite long stretches where nothing much seemed to be happening, the transcendent moments contained such perfect confluences of timing and material that it makes everything worthwhile. Each had a small army of players to contend with; Rowe's private army comprised about 40 players on stage. With so much amplification and keyed-up improvisers all keen to make with their chops, no wonder that at worst we ended up with so much sonic soup, lukewarm, slow moving and with chunks of vegetables floating in it. Which isn't to say these topnotch improvisers were vegetating. Actually the only vegetable there was me - I have a cabbage for a head. (EP)

Keith Rowe

29 October 2001

UNITED KINGDOM SOUND323 323(2) 3" CD (2002)

Live recording at Sound 323 - an excellent 20+ minute shot of guitar noise. These short bursts from Mark Wastell's Sound 323 shop in London are pretty satisfying despite the generic no-frills packaging (no artwork, all info printed on disc). Rowe starts off like a benign generator, letting his amplifier pump sensuous waves of throbbing benevolence across the floor and ceiling of that tiny North London space, then proceeds to unleash his deadly killer hand-fan, letting it blow freely across the sensitive strings of his hyped-up tabletop guitar-like beast. The trademark blissed-out sound floats upwards and onward, producing that totally mesmeric power that never fails to transfix all listeners. You will become a disembodied waif submitting to this dreamy hypnosis, allowing the good doctor Rowe to massage your temples with his bony fingers as he probes your inner being with carefully chosen words, healing past traumas. He doesn't always need the large canvas; even for short episodes like this he is capable of a detailed, fully-realised statement. Rouge et noir.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

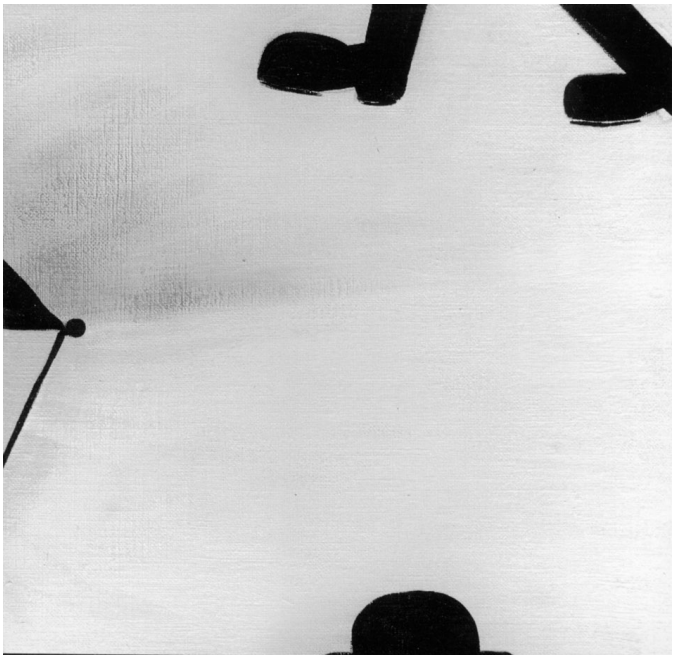
www.sound323.com

Keith Rowe / Thomas Lehn / Marcus Schmickler

Rabbit Run

USA ERSTWHILE RECORDS 027 CD (2003)

Some musicians would be satisfied with producing something of that quality once per annum, then recovering from the shock of being so creative. Rowe is the musician who just keeps on giving. Rabbit Run is quite another approach - a real bruiser of a disc. It comes from a 2002 festival in Cologne, and it's released on the great Erstwhile label in USA which is determined to up the ante every time - each year's crop of releases seems to improve on the last, if possible. Rabbit Run is one of the loudest and best improv records ever - assertive to the point of being aggressive, filling the room with an immediacy and gigantic presence that is - erm - remarkable. Short and sweet - in merely 40 minutes, it lays waste to the city around it, then scurries away guerilla-like onto its next commando assignment. Rabbit Run? More like a ferocious hippogriff than a tame rabbit...you've no place to hide as this elephantine lumbering beast tears loose on the rampage and physically manhandles you with its trunk, claws and tusks. In fact sleeve art seems to reference that king of cartoon anarchy and malevolent mischief, Bugs Bunny himself. If Bugs Bunny had been an improviser, this is the music he would have made! Marcus Schmickler plays digital keyboards, and works with computers, editing and mixing the final cut; but it's veteran Thomas Lehn with his vintage analogue synth who truly shines, almost stealing the show, blasting out gorgeous full-bodied grunts, howls and squeals with a complete lack of restraint or decency. Yes! Down with polite music! Keith Rowe, equipped only with his tabletop and electronics, retaliates against the Lehn offensive - rolling out his gear like a fucking Chieftain tank. Shortwave radio is part of his kit here, occasionally tuning into random music bursts with their hideous distorted thumping drums and fragments of wailing. When these two insane generals start bumping heads, the result is like a full-on mortar attack...Rowe cranks up amplifier to max, and you'd best take cover. This is everything I'd always wanted from improvised music, focussed yet unrestrained wild noise that presents a wall of incomprehensibility to the mystified normals, and can only be appreciated and understood by outcasts and freaks, like us. 'This CD could be played on shuffle', adds helpful note on circular insert in this smartly-packaged little monster. Indeed, comprised of 42 tracks over 40 minutes, Rabbit Run suggests that Schmickler has been busy with his clever digital editing suite, selecting only those moments with the greatest socko-factor and laying them



out in a devastating power-punch sequence that could wreak sensory havoc when played in any random order. I have an image of him executing this task with as much fiendish glee as though he were assembling an anti-personnel mine, thoughtfully packing it with shrapnel, razors and vicious plastic explosive by the pound. Essential release.

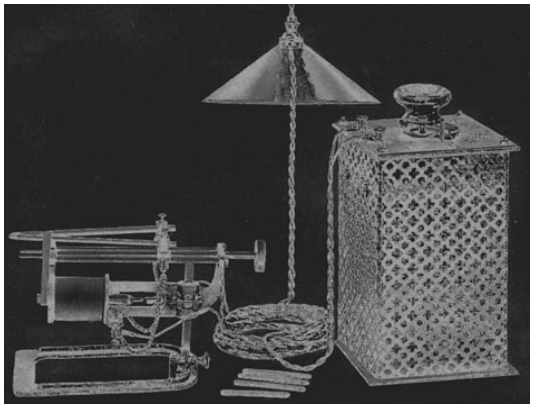
ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.erstwhilerecords.com

Michel Doneda / Urs Leimgruber / Keith Rowe

The Difference Between a Fish
FRANCE POTLATCH P302 CD (2002)

Very creditable, but as a groundbreaking release perhaps not one to cause major excitement in the neural centres. Two long pieces of 25 minutes each is your portion here. First one follows the 'classic' improvisational arc of starting slow and quiet, building up to great intensity and volume somewhere in the middle, and then tailing off again, until it dissipates into the night air like so much incense smoke. There's nothing wrong with tracing such an arc, by the way. The two European saxophonists contribute reliable, sturdy work - Urs Leimgruber growls out a steady, foghorn drone on his tenor sax, while Michel Doneda is permitted to add free grace-notes in the Evan Parker mode, but executed with tremendous restraint and subtlety. Rowe suspends everything in his guitar and electronics soup, playing some very effective musical amplifier hum and declining on this occasion to showcase any of his characteristic effects - springs, fans, rulers, bits of junk - in favour of simple droning guitar blocks, laid down like so many rolls of linoleum.



ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.potlatch.fr

Keith Rowe / John Tilbury

Duos for Doris
USA ERSTWHILE RECORDS 028 CD (2003)

Duos for Doris - ah, probably the pick of the bunch. John Tilbury, the piano player from AMM. Slow and mysterious beautiful passages from a pair of true masters. Two CDs long - yet you'll end up hungry for more of the same, believe me. The title, not a tribute to Stockhausen's Choir Fur Doris, in fact refers to John Tilbury's mother Doris, who died aged 96 just a couple days before they made this recording. One gathers that, between this personal tragedy and the so-called 'war against terrorism' just breaking out, Rowe and Tilbury were meditating much on human frailty and mortality as they delivered these stately performances. Certainly the very staticness of the first piece 'Cathnor' - an incredible 70 minutes of sustained inactivity - put me in mind of Tom Philips, the English painter who painted Benches in the 1970s. Derived from picture postcards of benches in public parks, Benches is an oblique statement on the fragility of the human frame and is laced with poignant references to Dante's inferno, 'all flesh is as grass', and so on. Philips regards sitting on a bench as a perfect symbol of mortality, for many reasons - one of them being that he pretty much spent a miserable day on a park bench when his father died. 'Cathnor' is a moving and strangely profound experience whichever way you cut it; for most of the duration, I felt like my entire body was being etherised, producing an uncanny pins-and-needles feeling within my very core of being, thereafter slowing down my metabolism and heart rate to the desired point where everything seems in slow motion. At this point I suppose that surgeons Rowe and Tilbury are ready to operate on me. Once again it's the gently crackling hum of Rowe's amplifier that produces this opiate effect, and proves that there's no point in hurrying anything - we wait 7 minutes before Tilbury even plays a single note. The 2nd CD contains two not-insubstantial pieces, 'Olaf' at 45 minutes and 'Oxleay' at 17:29, and are needed to complete the trilogy of this session which was recorded at studio CCAM in France on a single day in January 2003, but even so I regard them as wings to the main panel in this holy triptych. Worth playing all this in one sitting, to gain the sense that all the wisdom and understanding of these two venerable sages is being transmitted to you by a mysterious osmosis. That's all wasted on a dunce like me, of course. Either way, as with the most successful AMM performances, the actual music you hear is really just a small part of some greater unseen movement or action. Arrives with a strange cover featuring details from painting by Rowe, arrangements in yellow and black - a bowler hatted man and two club-feet walking along, vaguely cartoony and reminiscent of Philip Guston - which might be intentional, as this majestically slow music is not far away in effect from that of Morton Feldman (who was something of a Guston fanatic), and Tilbury has played Feldman's music too. (NB this is all garbage - it's actually intended as a tribute to L S Lowry, the semi-naive northerner painter who was much admired by Doris Tilbury). Chalk up another 'must-have' item in the Erstwhile catalogue and buy them while you can - no matter what praises we heap up in words, that doesn't lead to more sales for this kind of marginal music.

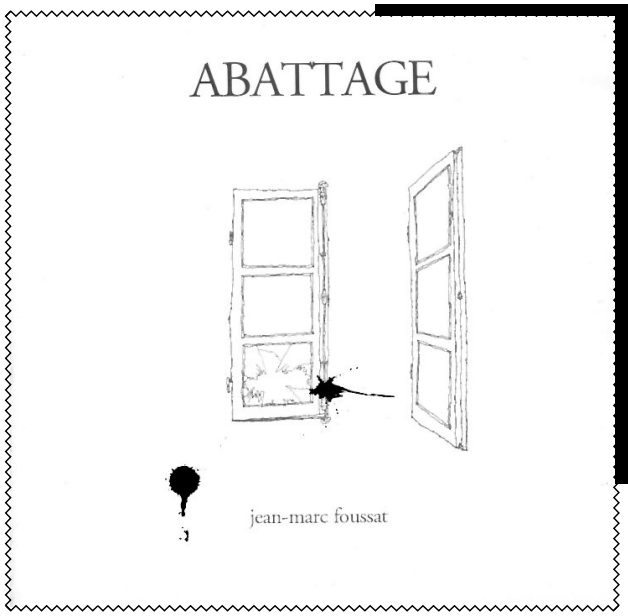
ED PINSENT 10-2003
www.erstwhilerecords.com

I can destroy those devils!

JEAN-MARC FOUSSAT

Jean-Marc Foussat
Abattage
FRANCE NO LABEL NO NUMBER
CD-R (2001)

A fantastic loony French LP from the early 1980s, now presumably long since unavailable and here repackaged in CD form. Begorrah! There's enough wild energy in Jean-Marc Foussat's outpourings to sustain the basic needs of a small French village (wine, bread, electricity, sex) for about the next ten years...this twitching, grinning octopus of music plays anything and everything he get his tentacles on, from guitars, pianos, the mighty EMS synth and assorted bric-a-brac, plus he did the (very original) field recordings and engineered his own sessions, composed and edited everything - his only collaborator is Jean-Francois Ballèvre on the piano on one track! If your hunger is for wild, unexpected combinations of far-flung freewheeling ideas, then this record (with the exception of first Faust LP, which oddly enough it does kinda resemble) absolutely takes the biscuit; let's cut to the chase, because the piano with pneumatic drill track is one of the most effective and most intensive examples of such demented mixings, but then you also get such things as truck drivers delivering huge vats of good French wine, screams, hammerings and poundings, and - I personally guarantee it - absolutely the wildest synth playing you have heard in your life. I can't over-exaggerate the value of the unfettered, screaming barbarity of Foussat's insane EMS work, which will ignite your spirit like a fucking sky-rocket and launch you 100 miles into the stratosphere. Zoosh!



Algerian-born Foussat started out as a guitarist in the mid-1970s, playing in various ensembles which were either very experimental or didn't last very long. Either way I assume nobody took much notice. He got more interested in playing the synth and then made a deliberate decision to stop performing in public, instead working at home with his tape recorders and magnetic tape. By the end of 1979 he secured a job in a studio and recorded lots of improvised music - and the labels he worked with from that point read like an A-list of independent labels that championed that early 1980s dream, that one day we could make the world safe for experimental music : Incus, Bead, Hat Hut, Po-Torch, Claxon, Rift, Rec Rec, Celluloid...any self-respecting weirdo in my circle of friends has LPs from all those labels in their collections, and it makes one nostalgic almost for a golden age when people who got involved in experimental music still had such things as commitment, integrity, and good ideas. Not quite like nowadays, that's for sure! He finished Abattage in August 1981; the French word means 'demolition' or literally, 'felling' - as though he were a lumberjack knocking down a forest of trees, using his slicing hands for axes!! As to how available this hand-made reissue is (still waiting an official reissue apparently), you'd better work fast and send your shekels to Jean-Marc, or be kicking yourself for evermore.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

pyjama55@free.fr

EP Abbatage means 'demolition'in English, I think. It sounds like you're having great fun on this record, either smashing things or recording the noises of destruction. Did you take great delight in this idea of destruction? Is it perhaps a metaphor...maybe for destroying ideas or people which you oppose?

JMF In French, the word Abattage has four main meanings (see below), and this is this polysemy I like so much. Yes, not one, but four meanings - and all like trash or gore, and all INTO the depth of the life. Destruction is there, but not only destruction. For me, if I had something to destroy at that time, it was more old inner demons than other things.
Abattage is something with which I can destroy those devils, to become more capable or better at what I'm doing, become able to dare - to build something from myself, breaking down the barriers which limited me before. Behind those broken limits, there is something like the music I hope for, and, in itself, in embryonic form, the necessity to break the limits in order to live, etc.
Abattage contains some secret and hidden musics and sounds I made between 1975 and 1980 which were at this moment (1981) absolutely necessary to manifest, because I was simply absolutely certain I *had* to make that music.

EP You made recordings for a lot of great labels which recorded and released improvised and experimental music in the 1980s. What work did you do? What drew you to that music? What musicians did you work with? The 'scene'appeared to be quite vibrant and vital then, even if there wasn't much money involved. How does it compare to nowadays?

JMF Travelling from Nice to Italy, because I'd read in a Jazz magazine an advert about the Florence/Pisa festival in 78 or 79, I received confirmation of the kind of music I wanted to engage with, hear, listen, do, live and love. Something was happening in this festival as a meeting between the US and the European way of music, between Jazz and Contemporary music, and the confrontation of those two spirits was marvellous. It was very simple and easy. I remember that it was in Pisa, in a little chapel, and listening to the Lovens/Lytton duet I thought the music I was hearing was genuinely coming directly from the brains of those two human beings playing together. Not a music from any instrument; a music directly from their brain to mine. And all the concerts were like this one. And I really felt free, as never again later. But I was terribly shy, and at this moment really afraid to play and all those musicians I meet there were so 'great' and 'real virtuosi' and generous that I preferred to hide my little 'self taught french guy' desire to play with them, and I decided to record them instead. Recording was easier and allowed me to listen and learn the music. As a tape recordist I was like an extra musician : the one who captures the music, to get the possibility of remembering it. That was the way I did recording.

EP What were you doing in your early guitar bands? What kind of music did you make? Why did you give up performing in public?

JMF At the beginning, I was trying to copy, understand and play like the Pop language of Gong, Soft Machine, Pink Floyd, and my other heroes! I was trying also to organize something with sounds, and looking for something different. I tried first with the electric guitar, but it was very difficult to hold a candle to them - Hendrix, Hillage, Allen, etc.

During the early beginning I never played on stage. It was a full garage (even if I played with my friends in my parent's dining room) band. Later we began to show something but I haven't got any recordings of it, and I recall it was as trashy as possible. As far as I can remember it was something quite Punk before the Punks, but unconsciously. I remember a concert where I lost my mediator and I finished the show with my guitar (a white necked white Stratocaster) covered red with blood 'cause I'd broken my index fingernail to play louder!!!

EP What models of EMS did you use? The EMS synthi? I understand this is a very difficult instrument to master. Who was your teacher? Or are you self taught?

JMF I always used an AKS or VCS III (by EMS) synthi. They are quite similar. I begin with this machine in 74 or 75 with a school friend, Jacques Sordoillet. We both liked together the same kind of experimental music and he had found that the American Center in Paris had a Studio managed by a contemporary composer named Essyad, and they would rent it for a cheap price. There, there were 2 AKS, a Grand piano, a lot of percussion instruments, 3 Revox tape recorders, a mixing table: the Ali Baba cavern itself. We didn't know anything about how to use this equipment (except I was then able to record and work with the Revoxs and the mixing system) and we began to learn by touching everything and trying all the possibilities, much like 18th century supporters of scientific experimental discovery. And it was good. So, later Jacques decided to buy a synthi and we went together to London, by train, to do that. With this one we began a new way to work with. One of us had the 'machine' for a month and he would try out everything he wanted. At the end he would show to the

other all the things he had found and we went ahead like that, during two years roughly.

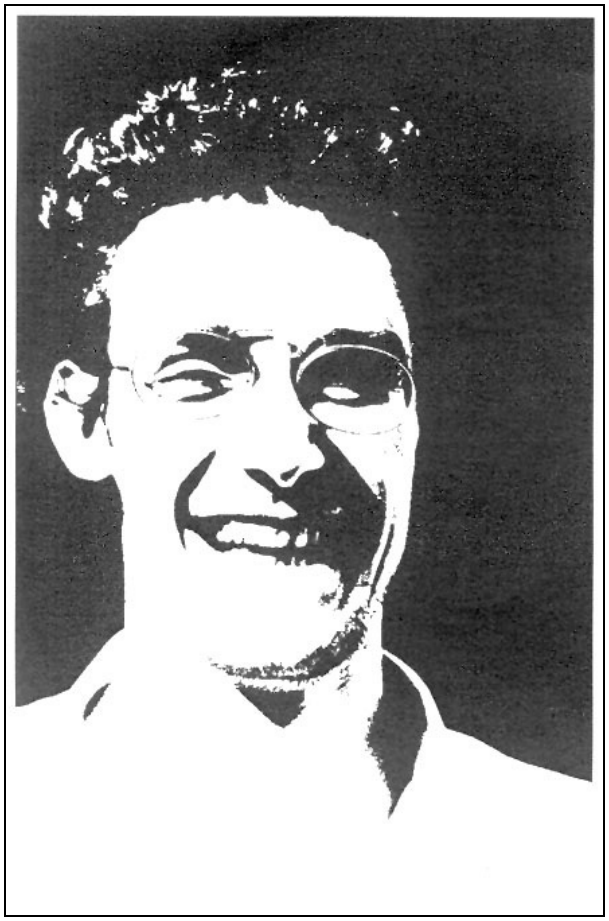
My grandfather died and I left Paris for one year and a half, to live in Nice where I began to work at many pieces of piano and acoustic guitar music, which were later involved in Abattage (but without any thoughts about making a record at this time). When I came back our friendship crashed, he disappeared stealing my guitar, so I bought a second hand VCS III, the one I still have and play today.

EP Is it better for you to make music alone, or with collaborators? What do you consider to be your most successful work?

Listening, preparing, thinking about music must be done 'alone'. Anyway, in a sense, playing is always 'alone' too, even if it is playing inside and with a band. Playing any instrument is still a kind of 'fight' between it and me. This solitude ends when a listener, or someone else to play with, comes along. Thank you 'the others', you let me share all those things I have at the ends of my fingers.

So I like both of the two ways, to be alone and to play with my friends. Because they must be friends. If they are not, I can't find any interest to play something with. I'm not looking especially for playing for its own sake. I'm just searching the pleasure to play with those who I like and love as human being and nothing else : Makoto, Sato, Jean-Francois Pauvros, Joe McPhee and not so many others. I'm still a little bit shy, probably I'll be like that to the end. I never want to play solo except for records where I have the time to organize something as I need. Time is very important I think.

So if you ask me for my most successful work it's difficult to answer. First I want to say : probably Abattage which is the first dot I put on, but also I know that each performance I



play with Marteau Rouge - a still living group after 12 years - today is the event I prefer, and probably the next one would be more exciting than ever. Each is different and this is only the collection of all of them which began to built something looking as a thing really interesting, I suppose.

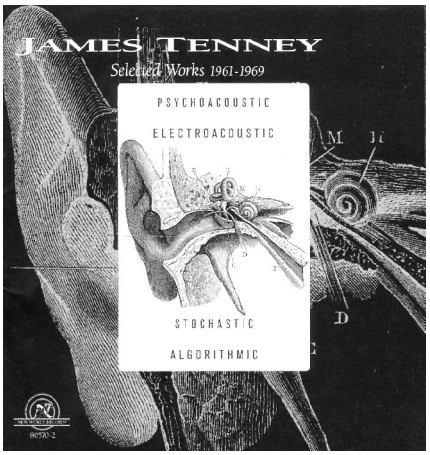
The meanings of Abattage

abattage / abataZ / nom masculin

1 (d'arbre) felling;
2 (d'animal de boucherie) slaughter ä; abattage rituel, ritual slaughter;
3 (de minerai) mining, working; abattage ‡ l'explosif blasting;
4[!] (énergie) dynamism; avoir de l'abattage to be very dynamic;
5[!] (prostitution) prostitution with a rapid turnover of clients.

Mad Intricacy

Modern Composition and Improvisation
By Chris Atton



James Tenney
Selected Works 1961-1969
USA NEW WORLD RECORDS 80570-2 CD (2003)

James Tenney was not the first composer to produce computer music. That honour must go to Newman Guttman, whose 'In the Silver Scale' was realized at Bell Labs, New Jersey by Max Mathews in 1957. 'It was terrible', Mathews has said. Tenney's stay at Bell Labs from 1961 to 1964 produced what are surely the first successful pieces of computer music. They are successful in terms of aesthetics - these pieces are no mere technical exercises, instead they deploy the technology to develop and organize sounds unheard at that time. They are successful in terms of listenability - in pieces such as Ergodos II (for John Cage), Tenney's use of stochastic algorithms produces music that is broadly determined, but in which the note-to-note, sound-to-sound and timbral developments are quite indeterminate. Under such conditions, the act of listening becomes an active process, where each sound is to be considered on its own terms, to be savoured until the next one comes along. And what sounds! Tenney was not drawn to the computer in order to realize the purity of post-serialism that was the aim of Stockhausen's Electronische Musik project. Tenney loved noise - his 1961 tape piece Collage #1 (Blue Suede), perhaps his best-known composition for its place in the history of 'plunderphonics', makes of Elivis Presley a fearsome noise-machine. His first computer piece at Bell, Analog #1 (Noise Study) was inspired by his daily commute from New York City through the Holland Tunnel - the piece is suitably, claustrophobically dense, yet never stifling. Other pieces from this period have a poignant delicacy that is absent from much of, say, the rarefied experiments that fill IRCAM's history. Sounds are squeezed and attenuated indeterminately - compositions bud, flower and decay in seconds, only to begin again. Nothing is ever the same. At times these pieces approach free improvisation on a computer. This reissue from New World Records is not simply an important document for historians of the American avant-garde, it is a seductive introduction to some of the most engaging computer music you are likely to hear.

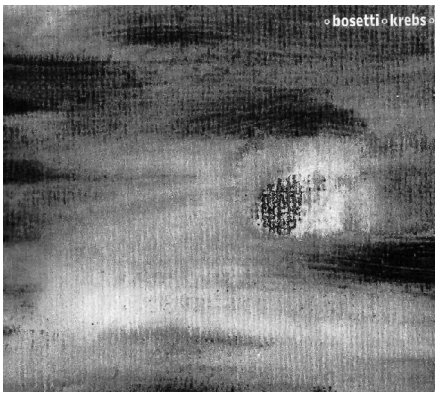
Martin Archer, Geraldine Monk, Julie Tippetts
fluvium
UNITED KINGDOM DISCUS 14 CD (2002)

From James Tenney in the 1960s to Sheffield-based improvisor/composer Martin Archer in 2003 might seem like far too big a step, but we'll try...Archer's prolificness has, to these ears at least , often resulted in a set of releases (on his own Discus label) that promise much, only occasionally delivering a consistently engaging set of pieces. Archer has done that here again, I feel, with his collaboration with poet Geraldine Monks and singer Julie Tippetts. The bulk of this album-length CD (i.e, around 45 minutes) is taken up with 'fluvium', a suite based on Monks's poems. Off the page they read like a post-apocalyptic e.e. cummings, and her delivery is most convincing in the passages that approach sound poetry. The more portentous pronouncements ('Electro-bacterial dis/ease.../seeping rich/stealth/con/tamin-a- ion') I find harder to stomach. Consequently the sections where the voices of Monks and Tippetts move with and against Archer's impressively sensitive electronics (as in the opening 'espial' and the long

'aftershock' that lies outside the suite itself), where the lines between composition, improvisation and studio post-production are unrecognizable - here the work can be revelatory. Archer's history as one quarter of the saxophone quartet Hornweb is occasionally revisited, with some keening soprano that, for me, puts what little I have heard of Courtney Pine's latest well into shade. It is, though, in the electronic processing, of digital synthesis and of voices where this release scores highly. Perhaps less drama next time?

Zbigniew Karkowski
ElectroStatics
USA POST-CONCRETE 006 CD (2003)

Processing and drama are both absent from Zbigniew Karkowski's ElectroStatics, realized at Radio France's radiophonic workshop. Abandoning his long, recent history of computer- ased compositions, this 42-minute, single-movement work is constructed solely from radio sounds. VLF and shortwave static seem to predominate and the piece appears to an essay in organization rather than transformation. Lengthy, overlayed sections of detuned radio broadcasts move slowly from passages of high activity to unstable drones. Unlike, say, the work of Disinformation, the length of the piece and its structuring suggest less of the exhibiting of radio emissions as 'sounds in themselves'; yet the rawness of the primary material remains apparent and the listener is gradually drawn into a



soundscape that, under the composer's direction, demonstrates that the creative possibilities of radio sound in much contemporary electronic music is far from exhausted.

Various Artists
China: The Sonic Avant-garde

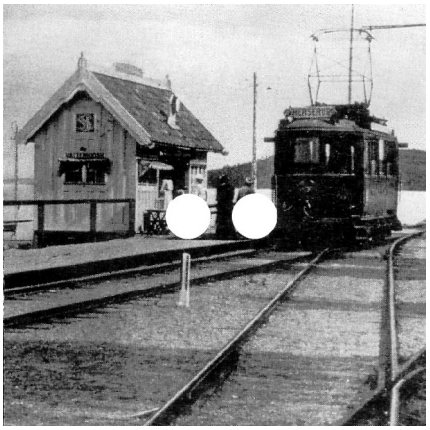
USA POST-CONCRETE 005 2CD (2003)

Similarly, though dealing with very different sound sources, the most impactful pieces featured on a double-cd of contemporary electronic music from China (China: The Sonic Avant-garde) are those that present soundscapes and found sounds largely left alone by the composer. Whilst there is no biographical information given, nor any composers' notes, my guess is that we have here a clutch of artists whose work has developed more out of contemporary electronica than out of the longer traditions of computer music or experimentalism. The international character of much of the music here (no-input mixing board improvisations, micro-techno, plunderphonics) has little to tell us about any particular, national approach to electronic music-making in China. It is only the pieces that work with the spoken word or traditional Chinese music that root themselves in their country of origin. These are, perhaps coincidentally, the most fascinating. The work of the various China Sound Units (which, as far as I can judge, is a project for field recordings) function as sidelights on Chinese urban culture, as well as offering essays in the productive minimalism of sound art. I use 'minimalism' carefully: The Beijing Sound Unit's 'minibus pimps' is an untampered field recording of young Chinese men touting for minibus trade on the streets of the country's capital - their repetitive and competitive calls resemble nothing less than Steve Reich's early tape experiments with found voices ('It's Gonna Rain' and 'Come Out'), as the voices gradually build up out-of-phase overlays. Here, though, the effect is the result of human competition, not the workings of tape recorders. The Shanghai Sound Unit's 'leili fengxing' sets two recordings of Chinese radio presenters against each other. The improbable proposition here is that the two voices (female and male) are reading the same text with the same intonation. The subtle phasing as they go in and out of time with each other is a striking essay in micro-minimalism. I can't help wondering, though, how is it that a radio station would broadcast the same programme text (at different times, of course - the simple but powerful genius of the piece is to bring the two together) read by two different people?

murmur
definition
GREECE ABSURD 25 CD-R (2003)

V/W
V/W
GREECE ABSURD 22 CD-R (2003)

Back to studio transformation: though we remain firmly in the world of the small system, and the domestic as the site for exploration. Two recent releases on the Absurd label (limited to 141 and 150 copies respectively) present greatly differing approaches to sonic manipulation. murmur's definition is noteworthy for its long centrepiece, 'spoke speak', a four-track analogue tape manipulation of a bicycle wheel: struck, bowed and plucked. Its obsessive focus on a single sound source recalls Pierre Henry's squeaky door studies for his 'Variations pour une porte et un soupir' - the first half of the piece is largely sparse, unmanipulated sound - its closing half is densely overlayed, the multiple wheels running in reverse. This piece stands out for its bold retention of the original sound sources - a piece such as liquid solid transforms its sources (amongst them are rain, 'fluorescent lighting' and 'airplane landing gear') beyond intelligibility - we could be listening to computer-generated sounds; for me, this rather dilutes the electroacoustic project. The other Absurd release here is V/W, a collaboration between Nikos Veliotis (cello) and Dan Warburton (violin). The range and timbre of their instruments remain, indeed they determine, an electroacoustic composition of great conviction. Chaotic rather than stochastic, random rather than aleatory (or so it seems to me), the second piece (of two) is a rarefied and chilling essay in dynamics and timbre - the ominous build-up of pressurized gases, rusting ratchets and blind animal chitterings - that could easily be the soundtrack to a Jan



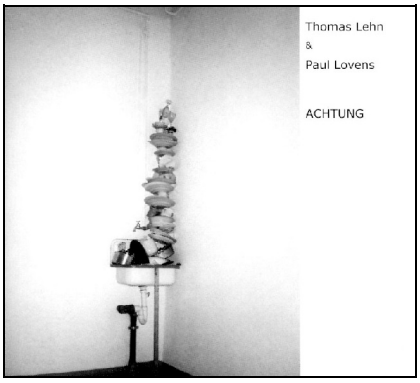
Svankmajer or Brothers Quay film (that's a recommendation, by the way). Whatever their relative strengths, the covers of both releases are highly striking: presented in circular card covers whose triple fold-out resemble surreal greetings cards - proving that there is creative life beyond the digipack.

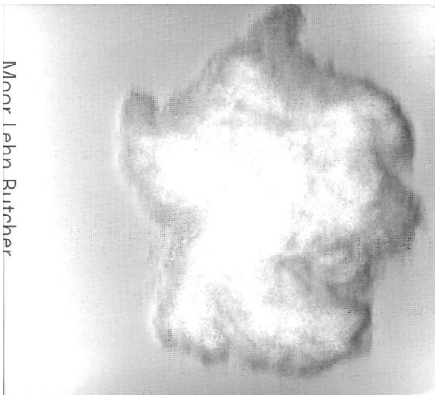
Bosetti/Krebs
Bosetti/Krebs
GERMANY GROB 540 CD (2003)

Approaching Bosetti and Krebs's self-titled release on Grob for the first time is to consider it operating in much the same electroacoustic domain as V/W. This, however, is improvisation of an extremely high order. Alessandro Bosetti (soprano saxophone) and Annette Krebs (guitar) seem to have learned much from Cage's legacy of indeterminism in performance (which was always close to free improvisation) as well as from his aleatory method which, in his larger-scale works at least, would tend to throw up successions of differing, complex timbres from various voices across the ensemble. They use silence in a Cageian way, too - not simply to separate sounds, but as a 'voice' in its own right. Bosetti and Krebs seem to apply those principles to duo improvisation - the sounds they produce are frighteningly varied - any resemblance to even the extended techniques we have come to expect from improvising saxophonists and guitarists is only occasional. Both musicians have extended the possibilities of their instruments in ways which this writer could never have predicted.

Andrea Neumann/Burkhard Beins
Lidingo
USA ERSTWHILE 026 CD (2002)

There comes a point when, even in this





most anti-canonical musical practice, it is tempting to believe it has all been heard (for the soprano that could be Evan Parker or John Butcher, for the guitar Derek Bailey or Fred Frith). This recording proves such complacency to be futile - the results on this recording should bring joy to even the most jaded listener. The mighty Erstwhile, led by the indefatigable Jon Abbey, offer a further example of this style. Lidingo features another duo: Andrea Neumann (inside piano and mixing desk) and Burkhard Beins (percussion and strings). Whilst their timbral palette is denser than that of Bossetti and Krebs and their dynamic range far greater (ranging from near-silence to massive, looming barks and roars), their sensibilities are similar: a post-Webernian interest in sounds in silence, in sounds and silence - at times their improvising verges on (dare I say it?) the romantic.

Matt Davis, Phil Durrant, Mark Wastell

open
USA ERSTWHILE 032 CD (2003)

The trio of Matt Davis, Phil Durrant and Mark Wastell similarly transmute their material out of all recognition on their open disc. Wastell's 'amplified textures' are a delight: I imagine contact mikes scraped, stroked and rubbed against sandpaper, bubble wrap and bird grit. The effect is intimate, almost in the room, though quite alien - just what are the sounds? Davis and Durrant's more thoroughly electronically-modified sounds work with Wastell's 'ground bass' textures to offer a soundscape that is both lush and sparse, dense often more with expectation than with luxuriance.

Thomas Lehn and Paul Lovens

Achtung
GERMANY GROB 537 CD (2003)

Moor, Lehn, Butcher

Thermal
THE NETHERLANDS UNSOUNDS 04 CD (2003)

GROB respond with a more traditional improvising duo, though its protagonists are far from ordinary. Rather, the sure-footed, lightning virtuosity of Achtung produced from the interchanges between Paul Lovens's small kit and Thomas Lehn's always-impressive analogue synthesizer return us to those classic duo combinations (Parker and Stevens, Bailey and Bennink) where, as Curt Sachs reminds us, we may find instrumental music as 'an agile movement of the hands... a florid, fast and brilliant display of virtuosity.' And no mean feat for a synthesizer player. (This is also the place to praise a trio recording featuring Lehn with saxophonist John Butcher and Ex guitarist Andy Moor. Thermal surprises, for while the sympathetic combination of Butcher and Lehn is already known, the wild card of Moor as avant-punk improvisor throws up some remarkable occasions for the collision of post-Frith electrics with more 'reductionist' approaches.)

Koji Asano

Piano Suite Vol. 1
SPAIN SOLSTICE 031 CD (2003)

Ross Lambert and Seymour Wright

Lucky Rabbit
UNITED KINGDOM
TWOTHOUSANDAND 2++6 CD (2003)

The intimacy of duo recordings such as these, whether recorded in concert or in studio, suggest a private conversation, one that might unsettle us until we become accustomed to the private language of the conversationalists. Interestingly, recordings made in private, domestic settings often have none of that intimacy. Koji Asano's Piano Suite Vol. 1, performed by Isao Otake sounds like a home recording. The resonances of the piano are attenuated, the dynamics flat. As far as I can judge, this is a notated piece,. but for much of its length it resembles an uninspired classical musician attempting to improvise freely. Ross Lambert and Seymour Wright have a more convincing pedigree as improvisors but their Lucky Rabbit collection of pieces, mostly improvised at home, are high on gesture, low on subtlety or imagination. At their best when joined by a clutch of Japanese musicians, whose computer-enerated sounds contextualize Lambert's electric guitar and Wright's alto saxophone, the duo alone seem to be practising rather than performing, testing out rather than producing. The fey sleeve notes don't help: 'The lucky rabbit can dance... lucky, lucky rabbit.'

Timeless Pulse

Live at CNMAT 2002
USA DEEP LISTENING DL 21-2002 CD (2002)

The electronic work produced by Pauline Oliveros in the 1960s revealed a composer whose interest in tape delay systems could create large-scale compositions of great

detail and sonic interest, whilst laying the groundwork for what became the ignorable music of 'ambient.' Her Deep Listening project, essentially free improvisation that accords with her abiding musical philosophy, I have always found less successful. In most recordings of the project I found Oliveros's contribution the weak link - her favoured, atonal skitterings on accordions often too disruptive of the other musicians' more measured, at times meditative, performances. I hear that here too: the work of percussionists George Marsh and Jennifer Wilsey is exemplary, and I would have preferred to have heard their work in conjunction with David Wessels' Buchla-led electronics , and without Oliveros (heresy, I know). There is both gravity and lightness in their playing which Oliveros seems to ignore, preferring to 'solo' over the top. Disappointing.

Kyle Bruckmann, Scott Rosenberg, Michael Zerang

Six Synaptics
USA BARELY AUDITABLE RECORDS 333 CD (2002)

Thomas Borgmann, Peter Brötzmann, William Parker, Rashied Bakr

The Cooler Suite
GERMANY GROB 539 CD (2003)

And so seemed the Six Synaptics the Bruckmann/Rosenberg/Zerang trio, at first hearing merely another electroacoustic improvising session. Repeated listenings, however, reveal a remarkable blurring of the line between free improvisation and free jazz - Bruckmann's electronic treatments of Rosenberg's saxes throw up woozy, detuned multiple lines that flow between Zerang's carefully abstract, percussive pulses. This set of six pieces are entirely consistent and over the length of this album offer an entirely new take on free jazz, freed of its tradition. Meanwhile, the free jazz tradition is alive and well in the hands of Brötzmann and his colleagues. Recorded at the Cooler in New York City in 1997, their two-part suite is rich in long, melancholic saxophone excursions, from which Brötzmann's trademark anger is never far away. William Parker's bass is emphatic here, prominent in what by all accounts was a last-minute recording decision. Whilst these performances break little new ground, they do demonstrate that, despite the maturing of the form (what Derek Bailey in his book Improvisation argued was evidence of 'stagnation'), the best free jazz may still compel with its strange beauty.

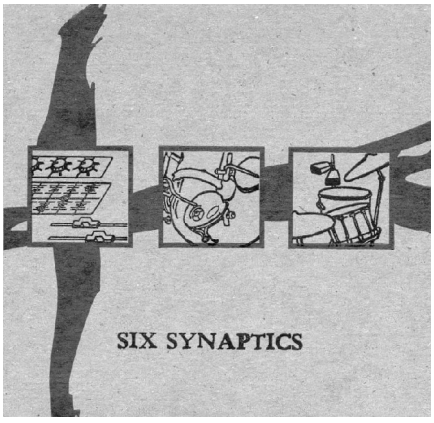
Blank featuring Raymond Pettibon

Blank meets Pettibon
GERMANY GROB 538 CD (2003)

Etron Fou le Loublan

Les Poumons Gonfles
FRANCE GAZUL GA 8661 AR CD (2003)

Less compelling and far more cerebral is the twenty-minute complete performance of the German trio Blank (which features veteran improvisor Rudiger Carl) providing 'backing' for the occasional declamatory vocalizing of Raymond Pettibon. Pettibon, known better for his SST sleeve art (Minutemen, Black Flag) here throws fragments of texts ('Put your damn hands up!'; 'Yo! Bum rush the show') into a detached, absurdist melange of keyboard, clarinet, drum machine and guitar (amongst other small instruments). The upshot is a halting, disengaged avant-karaoke where the American demotic sits strangely with the carefully disjointed sounds of the trio. More exuberantly absurdist were the French trio Etron Fou Leloublan. By the time of their fourth album, Les Poumons Gonfles (The Inflated Lungs), originally released in 1982, the trio had been joined by Jo Thirion on keyboards, trumpet and vocals. Thirion's songwriting brought a new concision to the trio's sprawling, multi-movement performances. Whilst Etron Fou's focus on surreal narrative lyrics remains, it is largely overwhelmed by shorter, more conventional song structures which, in keeping with the times, take equally from New Wave attitude and electro-pop timbres (after a fashion). More determinedly populist than their previous work, this reissue still contains much to remind us how enthralling Etron Fou could be in their mad intricacy.



And for those readers who like reviewers to tell them what to buy: James Tenney and Bosetti/Krebs.

CHRIS ATTON

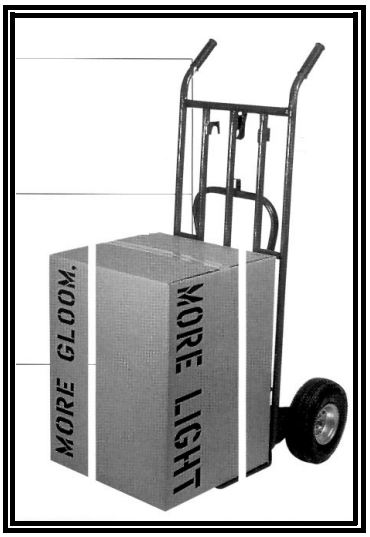
New World Records: www.newworldrecords.org
Discus: www.discus-music.co.uk
Post-Concrete: www.post-concrete.com
GROB: www.churchofgrob.com
Absurd: www.anet.gr/absurd
Erstwhile: www.erstwhilerecords.com
Unsounds: www.unsounds.com
Solstice: www.kojiasano.com
TwoThousandAnd: www.twothousandand.com
Deep Listening: www.deeplistening.org
Barely Auditable Records: www.barelyauditable.com
Gazul (a division of Musea): www.musearecords.com

Improvised music

LET THE SCARABS COME UNTO ME

nmperign / Günter Müller

More Gloom, More Light
ITALY ROSSBIN RS010 CD (2003)



European improviser Müller brings in his customary electronics and percussions, joined by the two Americans Greg Kelley on the trumpet and Bhob Rainey on the sax. As you remember nmperign have done this very successfully in the past on Selektion label.

Over four tracks - two of them recorded live at a Boston music festival - they maintain a constant air of tension so palpable that it's like having a giant 20ft doll in the room, an eerie mannequin worked with strange cogs and gears, so arbitrary that you never know what move it'll make next. Come to think of it, this ludicrous metaphor also adequately describes the bizarre dynamics of this music, ever-shifting and content to keep turning down some interesting side routes like 1920s bright young things speeding along in their Stutz Bearcats. For the most part, a rolling doomy undercurrent pervades every waking minute of it, this worrying emanation presumably seeping from the evil bones of Dr 'Mad' Müller as he stirs his secret potion in a metal bowl. This leaves space for Kelley and Rainey to add their comments, which are mostly chopped-up, fragmentary phrases - stabs, toots and squeely peeps, sometimes even vocal whoops moaned around the mouthpiece, rather than conventional fully-formed brass-instrument sentences. I like this uncertain, sketchy and skittery approach to improvising. Consequently they assume the appearance of lobsters leaping in the air after being thrown in pan of scalding water. Watch 'em turn red and scuttle across the kitchen floor!

The four titles play with the theme of more light and more gloom, and with their understanding of light and shade, these guys are conspiring to be the Vermeer of music, that genius control freak with his projection device; over the space of record the music reveals a gradual 'darkening' - growing ever more oppressive, claustrophobic and constraining. Even fewer notes than normal are needed towards the very end - perhaps that's all the musicians can manage, since by track four they're effectively encased in rubber like a bunch of pervy bondage freaks, and twitching helplessly against their steel bonds. The striking sleeve design shows the Gloom and the Light transmuted into solid form, arriving in cardboard parcels and wooden crates, much like Warhol's silkscreened Brillo-boxes stacked up in the art gallery. More than a nice conceit, that; a few spins of this record, with its first-class playing and immersive sound, you too will feel that gloom and that light as a palpable presence all around you, and come to truly know the truth behind clichés such as a 'pea-souper fog' or being able 'to cut the atmosphere with a knife'. Another Rossbin triumph.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Via Gozzano 1, 10098 Rivoil (TO), Italy
rossbin@libero.it
www.rossbin.com

HISS

Zahir
ITALY ROSSBIN RS011 CD (2003)

Splendid set from this vigorous, flying-serpent styled improvising foursome - it's the UK's Pat Thomas, playing his highly distinctive 'stabby' keyboards and nutsoid live electronics, plus 3 Norwegian players. There's Ivar Grydeland, slobbering like a mongoloid hyena and hooking his talons into some excellent volume-pedalled electric guitar. There's Tony Kulften nipping at the bass with wooden false teeth, and likewise Ingar Zach darting his jerky, spasmodic fingers across ceramic bowls and wooden boxes of percussion. Have to confess the Europeans are totally new names to me, yet no slouches they - there exist releases on the SOFA label in Norway, the guitarist and bassist have recorded with Tony Oxley, and the drummer (who runs SOFA) has toured in a duo with Derek Bailey some 3 years ago. This sizzling platter was laid down onto magnetic partridge tape in London by Toby Robinson at his Moat Studio, where he let their energy roam free while he practised his producer's satanic art, namely a fine attention for detail when it comes to capturing every last whisk of a drummer's frenetic tapping and every faint breathing gasp of a wheezy synth. He clearly had his 'jeweller's eye' screwed into his orbital for this session. For the most part the combo pump out a rapid-fire 'skitty' styled improv, with a lot of strumming, plucking, tinkling and thrashing all happening together at high speeds, but with sufficient gaps between the breathless, disjunctive phrases for other truths to start leaking in; for example, the phantom voices unleashed by Pat Thomas on the first track 'Wazifah', stuttering across the airwaves and beamed from an unknown galaxy. Or the randomised scratchings of Grydeland, which occasionally resolve into recognisable notes like single-letters in an elementary sentence. Although the separate strands of playing may appear totally disjointed at first, it's just a matter of using your listening-glue to connect these discombobulated bones, and soon the torn-up strips of newspaper will assemble themselves into the daily news. Mostly the music is taken at a cracking 'I'm your ape's banana' tilt, as though the impatient musicians had a quart of hot chili beans poured down their trousers, but the last track 'Khayal' is more slow and mysterious, with its chopped-up and seared bass notes, rattling-puffin styled percussion and frottage-method guitar strums all floating freely in the cosmic 'wind' of Thomas' synth, which purrs like a leopard-skinned medicine man in the 1930s-Africa background. This strange language takes some deciphering, to be sure, but these ancient scholars will yield their secrets to the diligent student yet. With sleevenote by US jazz writer Bill Shoemaker, who praises the upfront 'brusque' qualities of this very lively playing and uses it to chalk up another victory in his personal war against empty laptop drivel. I like some laptop music, and yet I still agree with him.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Via Gozzano 1, 10098 Rivoil (TO), Italy
rossbin@libero.it
www.rossbin.com

Control R Workshop

Missing
USA KOS RECORDINGS LP003 VINYL LP (ND)

Fairly worthwhile jam-blast outing from an extremelyobscure and slightlyraggedy improv combo based in the San Francisco Bay Area. They probably all have interesting hats on their heads, great record collections, and exciting sex lives. They've been going for about four-five years, releasing tapes and CD-Rs. Recorded live for radio broadcast, this release originally came out on vinyl, so perhaps this CD-R version has been supplied for promotional purposes.

Daron Key plays a scrapy guitar, Randy Sutherland picks the banjo (of all things, rarely heard in a free-improv context I trow) and also plays his sax, latter in rather lame and pallid squeaky-tooty way. Kessel Crocket provides percussion, heavy on the brushes. I like the first track in this 38 minute collection, which grinds away with a semi-frenetic monotone in a pleasing manner; the guitar sounds more like a violin. The remainder though strikes me as fairly ordinary (and quite derivative) free improvised blurting, without much conviction behind it.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Daron Key, 4369 Adeline St # 7, Emeryville CA 94608, USA
daron_k@yahoo.com

Joel Stern and Anthony Guerra

Stitch

AUSTRALIA IMPERMANENT IRE004 CD (2003)

There is no doubting the existence of a flourishing scene for improvised experimental / just-damn-new music in Australia at the moment. Even my old stomping ground across the ditch, Aotearoa, seems to no longer be the wasteland that it once was (the horror! the horror!) It seems as if there are more than a few names from the big land down under that have achieved a certain amount of notoriety in this seedy world of late, and adding to these is an increasingly large supporting cast of players such as these two.

Having come to the other side of the world to find each other (London to be precise), Stern and Guerra promptly set about improvising together, Stern on electronics and Guerra manning the guitar. They have both previously released work individually on Guerra's TwoThousandAnd label, and this CD apparently sees them together for the first time. There are nine tracks here in total, improvisations all, though in true minimal improv style there is nary a track listing to be found; behold the information age.

If there is a reluctance to claim ownership of the material there is certainly no corresponding hesitation about releasing it in the first place. Several of the tracks do seem a little undercooked and one wonders exactly what purpose they serve by being here. It would be remiss of me however to suggest that things were all doom and gloom, far from it. There is also much here that rewards repeated listening. The longer tracks especially where Stern and Guerra stretch out are intricately detailed landscapes that prove quite absorbing. The word that cries out to be used is 'textural', and this impression is only reinforced (maybe erroneously it must be admitted) knowing Guerra's association with AMM skin man Eddie Prévost and his attendance of Prévost's series of (excellent) workshops, which have been responsible for the introduction of a whole new school of players to the London scene.

Certainly one of the more salient features of this CD is its incorporation of some form of both tonality and rhythm. This is something which appears to be on the increase in the improv scene in general, a stepping back from the total avoidance of all obvious musical references to a place which can incorporate these alongside the territory pioneered by the first generation of free players in this country. And that is not such a bad place to be I think. There is nothing that inherently excludes the use of traditional musical elements in free improv and if I have a criticism it is that many people lack the discipline to play it well, something which these elements can help to provide.

There is no escaping the feeling that Stern and Guerra could have limited themselves to four or five tracks and come up with a better recording than they have. There is a sense that much of this CD does seem redolent of improv's often blurry focus on process at the expense of an end result, and yet at the same time there is no denying that it has its moments. A case of one too many shrimps on the sonic barbie perhaps? Maybe if they hadn't been paying quite so much attention to the 'minute gestural detail framed within sparsely arranged, slow moving passages of abstract continuity' of the album's press release they may have been more successful.

It's a mixed bag, but mixed bags are by no means bad things. It just means that you have to be prepared to take the rough with the smooth. Stern has apparently left the fair shores of Albion and returned to Australia with Guerra set to join him. It will be interesting to hear how this move affects their future output, if at all. They both seem to know the score down under so no doubt won't have too much trouble finding their feet, and on fertile ground at that.

AARON ROBERTSON

61 Prospect St, Erskineville, Sydney, NSW 2043, Australia
caleb.k@laudible.net
laudible.net/impermanent

Werner Dafeldecker / Franz Hautzinger / Sachiko M / John Tilbury

Absinth

GERMANY GROB 435 CD (2003)

A fine combo of players - UK veteran John Tilbury, plus two Europeans Dafeldecker and Hautzinger on the bass and trumpet respectively, and Sachiko M with her unique live electronics approach. Having performed as a quartet at the Nickeldorf Konfrontationen in July 2001, they decided they could do no worse than get together in the studio for a day. Recorded in Vienna, these four tracks proceed at a slow pace, led perhaps for the most part by the Tilbury approach; which isn't to say that anything here resembles the surface of AMM music, but the inner core of its slow-moving and deliberative dynamic appears to be the main operator. And what could be wrong with that? Franz Hautzinger has distinguished himself for all time with his excellent 2002 duo CD with Derek Bailey (also on the GROB label) and his muted trumpet is used incredibly sparingly on this disc. Sachiko M appears to have gone off into another alien realm altogether; her electronic sine wave sampler sounds have never been so weirdly beautiful.

The title track is built around slow-paced and long chords by Tilbury, perhaps remembering all his John Cage performances and wishing for a prepared piano. The spaces left by his foot-pedalled chords are filled by scrapes, bumps and rumbles from the other players. On 'Kleiner Webern', this same approach is used to lay ouyt the piecs of a musical jigsaw, led by Sachiko M with her inert white-noise blurpings, underpinned by bassoid-twunks from Werner D. Quite some way from the predilection (which blights a lot of modern improv and electronic music) to keep playing all the time, this shows four minds capable of issuing short, compacted statements but combined together in a large floating space. 'Hotm Vibration' shows the players growing more daring, allowing these statements to become more disjointed and fragmentary in exciting ways, and with a yet more alien feel to the sound. Hautzinger's trumpet is particularly good here, providing a breathy blast of evil wind which causes ripples in a peaceful landscape. The final cut 'Gitter' is a more sustained droning and rattling bricolage, where the four players now blend so seamlessly it's much harder to identify individual voices or instruments. A more meaty blend of sandwiched layers results.

In all a quiet and mysterious 'dark horse' of a recording, some pretty inspiring modern music from excellent players who continue to add life, meaning, dimensions and value to the form of improvisation; even the mediocre Dafeldecker, who has misfired before, is improving. They four players pay close attention to precise dynamics, interactivity, and leaving enough space; nobody falls asleep bewitched by their own irresistible droning, nor falls back on familiar riffing.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

Alte Koelner Str 10, D-40699 Erkrath, Germany
www.churchofgrob.com

Günter Müller and Otomo Yoshihide

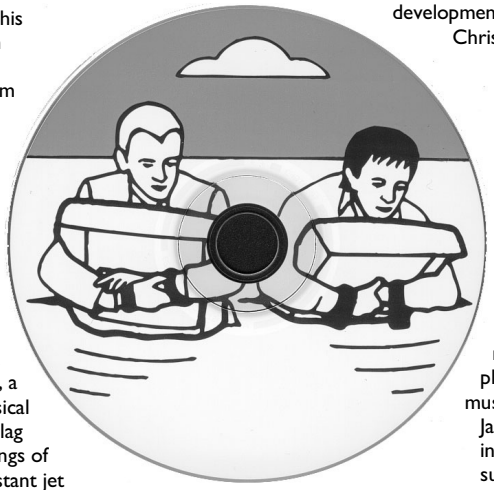
Time Travel

USA ERSTWHILE RECORDS 029 CD (2003)

Seven studio recordings made in 2002, by new-music titan superstars Müller and Otomo. Well, I hate to complain, but I'm not sure if this one's an essential release - and it might even be a bit boring. Despite the usual lavish

praise I like to heap on the Erstwhile label, it is not up to their usual high standards and finds Müller and Otomo dozing in the studio where they ought to be sparking ideas like blue flames off each other. Let's try and look at it positively - 'Time Travel' does successfully create subtle landscapes, whirling pools of shifting sands, in which the attentive listener can truly roam forever and get lost - on a good day. The 2nd track has Otomo plucking the guitar in way that sounds like he lives at the bottom of the sea, while Günter provides an electronic rhythmical crackling. And track 4 has some pretty good turntable work creating a semi-hypnotic effect, as does track 5 with its pleasant soma-like throbs.

But this CD is mostly sluggish and slow, cursed with a sonic murkiness that betokens an uncharacteristic laziness on part of these genius players. Very episodic; it may even be one or two long jams, digitally edited and reformed into seven bite-size portions. No real shape to the pieces, which simply wander in, sit there like fat vegetables, then wander out again. Not enough real playing exhibited, too much leaning on effects.



No tension or drama for this listener, I fear. I say this with great regret, as both of these guys (Otomo in particular) rank highly in my personal Pantheon of musical heroes and have done things that earn them a place in history ten times over; and they are personal friends of each other from several years back, in fact the track titles are named after music festivals, starting with one in Matsushima in 1989, where they have met and worked together. So the record has a real bond of friendship and musical trust and respect underpinning it, and bound up within it. The 'time travel' theme no doubt refers to their personal reflections on their musical relationships over the last 14 years. Unfortunately, the CD ends up conveying something else entirely, a not-unrelated factor of playing at international musical festivals - jet-lag. Yes, this might be the perfect jet-lag CD, embodying those strange and unpleasant feelings of apathy and disconnectedness that result from constant jet flying. This conclusion is not denied by the sleeve art, which is by Friederike Paetzold and according to press release 'is based on vector distortions of the world time zone map evoking the effects of frequent flying.' As if to confirm this view, the artwork for CD label depicts two men floating in ocean in graphic style plucked from airplane safety brochure, clinging onto floats as though happy to have survived the disaster. Listener feels the same way, suspended in an endless ocean of rather ordinary electronic sounds, with no prospect of rescue on horizon.
ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.erstwhilerecords.com

Tetuzi Akiyama in duets with Greg Malcolm, Toshimaru Nakamura, Bruce Russell

International Domestic

NEW ZEALAND CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES040 CD (2003)

A document of live improvisation music shows in New Zealand by Akiyama on prepared acoustic guitar, Nakamura on his no-input mixing board, Malcolm on adapted multi-pick-up guitar and Russell on electronics, including a clavioline keyboard. The recording is structured so that Akiyama appears to be playing duets with each of the other musicians. Although there is a large variety of often very startling and beautiful sounds and aggressive noises produced by all the musicians (even from Nakamura who creates near-Japanoise blasts at times), I find that with repeated listenings the novelty value of these sounds wears off and the shortcomings of the CD become apparent: everything sounds disjointed and what the musicians produce does not contribute to any sense of unity within the tracks themselves let alone the whole CD. On one track there is so much sonic space between the players you can hear the background traffic noises which themselves provide an interesting counterpoint! I get the impression that there's a lot of musical ping-pong bouncing around which at the time the recordings were made would have been enjoyable for the players and the audience but which listeners to the CD are not privy to, being at a distance from the visual / spatial / social context of the music and this is something people who document live music improvisation need to be aware of. The only track likely to maintain the listener's attention is the duet with Bruce Russell as that's the funniest (all those farting electronic noises). If you were to put this CD up against, say, Keith Rowe's solo live recordings like Harsh: Guitar Solo, I know I'd choose Mr Rowe any day because his recordings really sound like they were made for invisible listeners as well as the people in front of and around him.

JENNIFER HOR

hcorp@clear.net.nz

Assumed Possibilities

Still Point

ITALY ROSSBIN RS007 CD (2002)

A minimal-improv masterpiece. It's played and performed by four topnotch UK musicians who have made astounding quantum-leap developments with their personal styles in the last 5-6 years. Chris Burn remains a favourite of this writer due to his excellent semi-composed work with the Chris Burn Ensemble, whom I have seen live and whose records are uniformly excellent. For that project he recruited some of the best-ever cutting edge UK and European players and made records which have been cruelly overlooked and have not yet gathered the respect due to them, in my opinion. Phil Durrant, violinist, is here too - also played with Chris Burn in his time - and did solo and group work through the 1990s that was stunningly fine. Has since developed a crush on laptop music which was a grave mistake, but he may have rescinded that flirtation. Mark Wastell plays cello (vioncello here), claims he was playing music that was very close to 'Onkyo' before the Japanese players even got to it (see last issue interview). Wastell may indeed be responsible for suggesting the players investigate this quiet, minimal and highly disciplined route. Rhodri Davies is unique improvising harpist and has been redefining his sound radically - see his solo release this ish. So there's the combo...

And what are they at? Slow, very quiet and un-busy music; but its un-business does not equate to lack of ideas. Au contraire, the abundant ideas here are so sharply focussed you could use this CD to open your morning mail, fillet an entire side of salmon, and then carve your initials on every oak tree from here to Sevenoaks - and it would still be as sharp as a razor! Yep, the intensity of creative thought is so concentrated, it's like a projected beam of laser-energy, capable of slowly burning a hole through six inches of steel and enabling you to get to that gold bullion inside the safe. Credit to all for creating this beautiful, steely, and spacey music. Compare this with Chris Burn's 1997 CD Navigations and see how far things have developed. Here, the players don't so much navigate, they collectively pile into a small rubber dinghy, send up flares and hope for the best. In fact, they may not even be at sea!

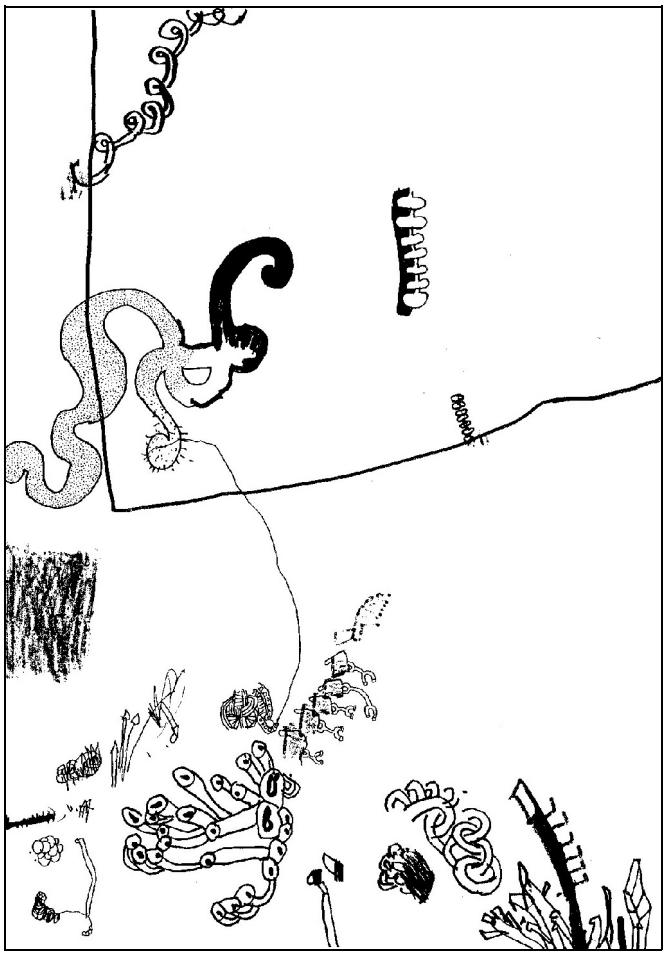
Nine tracks, all improvised apart from one long composition by Mark Wastell and one short one by Rhodri Davies. 'Related Activity' by Wastell alternates passages of toy pianos (played by Burn) with muffled cello and harp plucking; a smallness of scale is suggested by the modest sounds, belied by the huge ambition behind the work. A very clean and 'open' structure and (like much of the work here) suggestive of tremendous power and volume hidden below the audible surface. The simple alternating structure, moving carefully between different textures and timbres, is saying something quite profound - though I don't yet know what it is. 'Starwyte' - another great one - more presence and more discernible 'playing' compared to some of the minimal works here - still extremely spacey and open, with an effective combination of very low piano notes, scrapey sounds, high squeaks, and sinister creakings, plus detuned plunks from the harp. Alive with tension, 'Starwyte' depicts a strange and perplexing dream landscape. 'Styrin' - another standout piece, and a near-perfect form is achieved over 8 minutes; mysterious and dreamy; pinpoints of light in a dark field, or rather thin grey lines etched across lots of white space.

Each track fades in, starts slow, appears hesitant and shy, yet it gains in confidence in less than a minute and starts to deliver its stark statements. Bony figure climbs out of closet and shakes your hand. Then strips of flesh appear from nowhere, and wrap themselves around those bones. Some of these works are miniatures, lasting some 2-3 minutes, but no less intense or relentless. They are diamonds, flung out from mouth of volcano, in whose

facets one can discern the entire structure of the centre of the earth. To sum up: here be restraint, stern discipline, silence, tension, and a ruthless determination to explore every last zone of the alien landscapes they have chosen to investigate. And yet they can do all this in tandem, with the same kind of intuition, listening and learning skills you associate with all the best improvised music. I am highly impressed. This is so unlike the sort of busy, noisy, scrapey UK improv within the 'Company' tradition, yet is so incredibly effective that it provides new possible avenues of development for the future.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Via Gozzano 1, 10098 Rivoil (TO), Italy
rossbin@libero.it
www.rossbin.com



Rhodri Davies

Trem

UNITED KINGDOM
CONFRONT 11 CD [2002]

Much of the above goes double for this, a solo release by another UK improviser who is one of the few modern players to have applied himself to this instrument (another one is Anne Le Baron, who played with Derek Bailey's Company on the Epiphany double LP in 1982). And he continues to do it in a very singular way. Is that really a harp? So exclaim all my many friends who hear this CD for the first time - amazed at the uncanny sounds he's wringing from it. This is but one of three good reasons why you should investigate Rhodri's new record.

1) Extremely unusual sounds, as stated. The opening track is where he throws down the gauntlet, lays out his wares and determines to prove to the world he can make his instrument sound both uncharacteristic and amazing, and virtually redefine what it's capable of. 'Cresis' starts off with a series of eerie barks - more like the mouthpiece of a rudimentary saxophone being tooted by a retarded dwarf in a metal corridor, than something emerging from a stringed instrument. I assume he's found some way to gather loads of harp-strings in the wedge of one of his enormous hands (one of which is reportedly six foot square) and pull them together in a huge clump, like pulling a girl's ponytail, until the strings all make this hooting sound, or the girl starts crying. Not since the alchemists plucked up the Mandrake root, thus causing the homunculus within it to scream as it died, has such an uncanny squawk emerged from the pulling motion of a man. Every other track, Davies rolls up his sleeves and sweats blood to find another new exotic sound for us; 'Undur' uses detuned strings and comes close to resembling a koto, 'Beres' allows squeaks and scrapes to enter the vocabulary. 'Atam' is most mysterious of all, with its vague clattering like someone packing up for the evening. 'Trem' has a lovely hoover noise, but it's not a harp - this is a percussion and tape piece. However, it's not all 'weird sounds' for their own sake, which brings us to next point...

2) Very good playing. These interesting sonic experiments do not disguise Rhodri's high degree of skill as an improviser, and one who knows his chosen instrument back to front and inside out; he is fully informed as to the liberties he may take. 'Plosif' and 'Berant' deliver some of the strongest, most innovative and most accomplished improvised playing I've heard anywhere, on any instrument. The former starts with delicious scrapey drones, but soon develops into complex plucked phrases and invented chords that simply baffle the mind. The latter could be heard as a Derek Bailey tribute, or impersonation of same; angry strums, wilder plucks, huge gaps between phrases and again, a fascinating illogical structure that repays lots of careful relistens. Phew.

3) Has reinvented himself, and taken harp into new realms with him. True, his earlier CDs (particularly 1999's Malthouse, with John Bissett, or his work with IST) were no clunkers, but only a fiercely determined artist would be prepared to throw as much of the past as he has into the melting pot. This is the hallmark of true creativity, in my book. Perhaps it's also fair to say he has looked into and displayed more influences outside the world of 'classic' improv - you can hear Feldman, Behrens, and even a touch of electro-acoustic at work here. Great record - all recorded in 2001, with live performances captured by the UK new music 'archivist' Tim Fletcher, and released on the same label that put out Mark Wastell's Foldings CD last year.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.confront.info
www.rhodridavies.com

Will Guthrie

Building Blocks

AUSTRALIA ANTBOY04 CD (2003)

The debut full-length solo album from Australian percussionist Will Guthrie consists of two solo pieces and a live improvisation in which our man uses amplified percussion, delicate feedback and various objects including a record player and motor-based toys. The first track 'Blanket' is a soft and gently metallic drone over which sounds drift lazily as if through a hot thick haze of dust and smoke. A stick runs over a corrugated metal sheet, deep bass sounds bubble and a crackle continues relentlessly while various other mysterious slips of noise (of quite mundane origins) make their way through the track. At about the 15th or 16th minute the track becomes dynamic with a deep drone that goes on for a couple of minutes before coming to a sudden halt, leaving the track to tail off imperceptibly. 'Eleven' is a more forceful and busy track with much buzzing, rattling, scraping and ringing of objects, one of which may be a bicycle bell.

Then we have the live piece, 'Westspace', which sounds more like what we might expect from a solo percussionist: Guthrie is very busy hitting his drumsticks on a metal drum, a bell and other things that happen to get in his way. Deep rumbling and knocking noises are gradually joined by drones that reveal themselves very slowly. Despite this being a live track (and over 20 minutes in length), it divides into three uneven sections: at the halfway mark, the track turns into a continuously ringing drone draped with deep metal echoes and spine-chilling runs over a rotating sheet of metal (or so I imagine); the drone ends after about five minutes (but not suddenly as in the first track). The piece carries on for a while yet - I consider this part superfluous to the rest of the track as it's drawn out and seems a bit muddled at times, and I think I hear a flat note in it somewhere.

Overall this is a pleasant recording with sounds that will have you guessing as to how Guthrie produced them and what instruments he used. The live track could have done with a bit of editing towards the end but this is a minor quibble and I otherwise don't find the album too long or boring. A modest but worthy first effort for a new(ish) kid on the block.

JENNIFER HOR

www.antboymusic.com

Paul Guilford

Raw FA: Solo Improvisations

USA TEMPO KANNAN BAIL TK83 CD (1995)

These 14 tracks from 1995 descry Guildford's efforts to express his inner being via the gift of solo improvisation. It's not very good; below-average electronics (to begin with) and (later on) rather subdued grating noise. He can run the gamut from harsh squealing, to odd distant clanging, through to queasy anti-melodic whimpering on an analogue synth, but everything comes across as about as worthwhile as a day in a shopping mall wearing a chicken suit - ie totally pointless and meaningless. His track titles, such as 'phoeb ref', 'za re grif', 'zx zx 45' and 'cirakakat' likewise reflect his complete lack of interest in communicating with other human beings.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

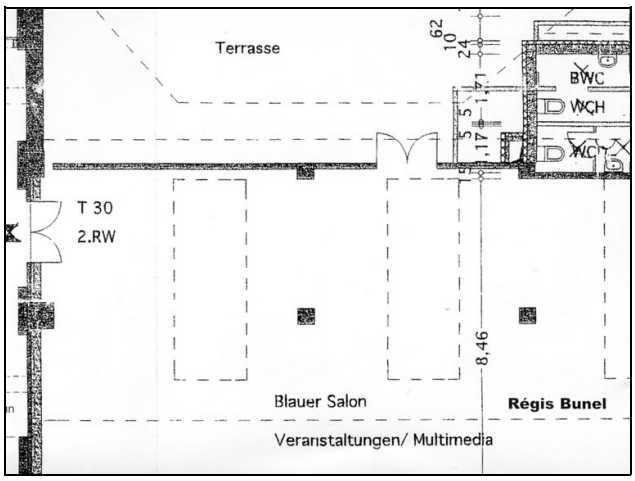
2135 Lexington, Houston, TX 77098, USA

Régis Bunel

Blauer Salon

FRANCE VERT PITUITE LA BELLE VP0101 CD (2002)

Three very fine and lengthy sax solos from Bunel, which are especially engaging when he uses the 'prepared sax', which one assumes has to be attached to some form of electronic enhancement to produce these fascinating delay, distortion and amplified effects. At times it sounds as though there are at least three musicians playing, there's so much musical activity happening before your ears, yet his set-up is very compact as tiny photo here reveals. He could probably pile himself and his amp into back of an average family car and play live at your picnic, if you could be bothered to lend him ears. Bunel has a package of goodies just waiting to pour out of the bell of his tenor - he can give you sweet melodies and tasty sounds, as good as a fine raspberry sorbet; he can equally do the 'dirty' sounds as surely as a mangy cur crawling around the back streets of Pigalle will howl around the ankles of a sleazy transvestite. He can blast out an industrial-strength foghorn blurt as surely as Peter Brötzmann. He emits lengthy, dirge-y drones as easily as any French politician holding forth about subjects they know nothing about, the difference here being that Bunel probably knows a million things and we're only getting the tip of the iceberg of his knowledge and experience on this release. The filthy feedback effect adds considerably to one's enjoyment when his sax sounds becomes so greased-up with 3 day-old lard that it sounds more like a heavy metal guitar, for example at about five minutes near the end of track one, called 'Verlorene Blues For...'. I might add the room ambience of the gallery performance space, complete with the familiar fire doors slamming in the distance (one would think that porters were specially hired to do this for art-music releases, it's so commonplace), adds considerably to your listening pleasure. Then again on the third cut, the player is alternating volubly between sweet, tuneful drones, and nasty inarticulate low grunting noises that, language-wise, are only one stage up the evolutionary scale from Piltdown Man. By this point the audience have wandered into the arena and are bleating in fluent French their squeal of approval and/or approbation, vocal contributions which add a great deal to this recording. I love this guy - wish I could share a dish of frites with him some time. He recorded these sessions on his minidisc player in Berlin in March 2001 as part of an exhibition called 'Hier Und Jetzt' which he did with his sparring partner Aurore Marette; they've worked together since 2000 as Pink Is Not Red, if that means anything to you. Comes wrapped in a 'floor plan' drawing sleeve that makes you think of Anthony Braxton or something. In fact he's a European free jazzer whom I've never heard of before but who deserves his spot in the limelight. Wonder if he ever did anything for FMP?



ED PINSENT 11-2003

11 Place Gambetta, 75020 Paris, France
vertpituite@multimania.com
www.vertpituite.multimania.com

Alessandro Bosetti / Gregor Hotz / Kai Fagaschinski / Rudi Mahall

Berlin Reeds

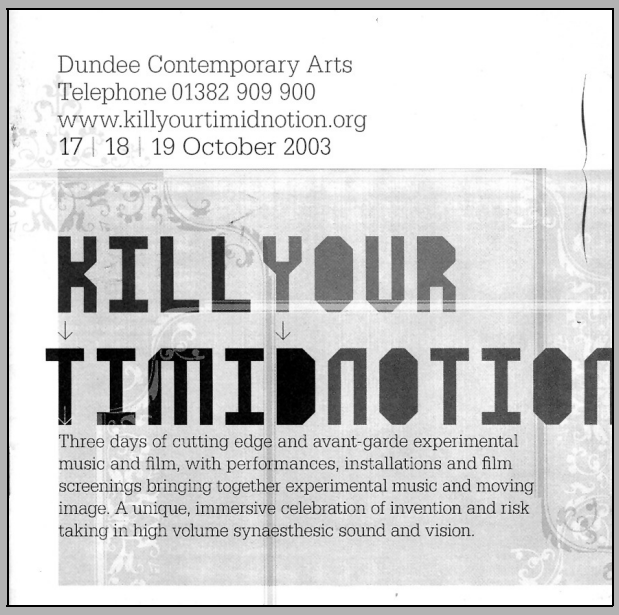
GERMANY ABSINTH RECORDS 001 4 x 3" CDS (2003)

A groovy package - four mini-CDs by four little-known German huffers and puffers pulling on their clarinets and their saxophones, mounted in a nice dinky gatefold package that looks like it's been assembled by hand, and in a limited edition of 200 copies. Alessandro Bosetti is the first of these Berlin reed-players, and he's using his soprano sax to generate feedback using two cassette recorders. On his 'unplayed saxophone' he summons up a distorted cloud of friendly-ugliness, like a two-foot growling monster crawling out of the sewers. Great start to proceedings. Gregor Hotz picks up his bass sax, and blows out some excessively l-o-n-g tones in a sustained meditation on his 'Friendly fire'. The human frame should not be able to deliver breaths that last this long! He's certainly a steady helmsman with a firm grasp on the rudder; and even though he leaves lots of elliptical pauses, he brings this ship into harbour safely. Rudi Mahall has the fourth and final set, and he plays three live cuts recorded at a jazz festival. Not unpleasant, but these conventional pieces are the most 'jazz-like' of the set, full of real playing and riffing and not far away from the work of Eric Dolphy on the bass clarinet. Kai Fagaschinski has the best work here for my money, playing his solo clarinet in the studio recorded with help of Michael Renkel, the electronicist / improviser who makes amazing deconstructions out of improvised music pieces (see issue 10). Fagaschinski's two pieces are both very carefully played, over-blown, breathy moan-oid works, very directed and quite meditational. Like Greg Kelley or Axel Dörner, he's exploring the sound of the instrument as though it had never been played before, and also exploring the capacity of his own lungs! (You hear as much the sound of his breath as you do of the instrument). So, final score - 3 goals for the experimenters, one goal for post-war jazz...and a big prize for this new label. Watch out for these birds.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

marcus.liebig@absinthRecords.com
www.absinthRecords.com

Kill Your Timid Notion festival



Dundee Contemporary Arts, 17-19 October 2003

An excellent festival held over three crisp autumn days in October in Dundee - and what made it such a success? Lots of things. The enthusiastic curators knew and understand and more importantly enjoy the music they were dealing with, and genuinely wanted to share it with an audience. The (art gallery) venue was different, allowing audience to walk all around the stage like a boxing-ring. The sound projection quality was frankly devastatingly good. And the choice of acts tempered the (inevitable) selection of laptop and electronic music with a good selection of live improvisation and (gasp) real bands playing something not a million miles away from rock music. Plus in the daytime you had a great selection of avant-garde movies in the theatre downstairs. To all of the above, the audience naturally responded as only a good audience can - with enjoyment, enthusiasm, applause, attention, and love, which all feeds back and makes the music better too.

Right from the start, curator Barry Esson stressed the synaesthetic audio-visual side of the festival as he introduced it as a showcase for 'the most important experimental musicians and film-makers' in the world today. Every musician who appeared had their act augmented by a film (or similar kinetic experience) - usually of their own making - projected on four walls of the gallery simultaneously. Overwhelming effect, a treat for the senses - and the synchronicity of music / image is something modern art has been seriously exploring throughout the 20th century. A lot of variety with the choice of imagery too. Where the computer-based laptop musicians such as Ryoji Ikdea and Carsten Nicolai opted for brutalist hard-edged abstraction full of lines and grids, Philip Jeck and Steve Roden went for something softer and more colourful. The Mirror performance was a live accompaniment to notorious Swedish silent movie, Haxan: Witchcraft through the Ages, while [The User] had a very specific optical readout as a component of their ambitious large-scale live sound environment. The group Phonographics used a film by Gustav Deutsch, a lot of library and found images in clever loops; while Sunburned Hand of the Man simply brought their own weird home movies, showing them playing at home, holding impromptu interviews, sorting out colour cover artworks to LPs, and even performing their own DIY zombie movie. Low-grade Stan Brakhage at its best. And if all that visual feasting weren't enough, the daytimes were profitably occupied with viewing (at the cinema downstairs) an outstanding selection of art movies both old and new, chosen by Esson's partner Briony. If this were a film magazine (and some people think it ought to be), then I could spend several enthused paragraphs describing my assorted retinal and mental pleasures derived from the stimuli experienced in that darkened chamber. But we're running out of time.

When I saw the performance stage in the gallery I thought of a boxing ring, as each performer mounted that square platform and found themselves surrounded by bloodthirsty music fans, baying like wolves for hard-core, high-volume digital action. The PA speakers, small but powerful beasts, were mounted at four corners of the 'ring' and projected sounds in multi-directions, making full use of the acoustics of the gallery's bare walls. The sound design alone should win prizes; everything sounded magnificent, crystal clear and razor sharp, with zero distortion even at loud volumes. And the dynamics of the set-up constituted an effective alternative to the usual concert stage arrangement, where the audience sit in rows and have the music transmitted to them in one direction only. Here, you had continual freedom to choose your optimum position for music / cinema enjoyment (albeit the only place to sit was a hard wooden floor). I'm sure this contributed no end to the audience's overall satisfaction, as there was virtually no talking during performances, respect for the music and for each other, and overall good vibes.

17 October - Cyclo / Ryoji Ikeda and Carsten Nicolai / Steve Roden / Alva Noto

On Friday night, Carsten Nicolai and Ryoki Ikeda took the stage first, manning their laptops to unleash cold, abstracted ultrasonics and subsonics at near-dangerous volumes. The high tones were imperceptible as shrieking bats, while the bass tones were strong enough to jolt your intestines upwards through the abdominal cavity into the brain. A set of improvised linear electronics here, gently changing, and the changes could be discerned through shapes on the screen; here a buzzing noise created an instant gyroscope shape; there a beeping rhythm created spirograph patterns. Much fuller sound and slightly more syncopated than Ikeda ever manages on CD, the live environment is certainly the best way to experience this precise minimal work; the tones are fuller, fiercer, and the textures and contrasts are more evident. However, as the duo went on, the best they could develop what they were doing was to turn it into a kind of minimal, stilted, arty techno music; the audience began to nod their heads as they thought they recognised something like a dance beat. Buzz-bleep-chop. Bass thud-toot-scuzzz-saw-saw-saw, rip. The beats became faster and more violent, snapping like pistol shots, and even the dirty tones were clean. All the time the screen was going berserk, trying to keep up - throwing out coloured shapes like fern leaves, wheels, worms, fireworks, helixes, stars and fireflies.

Steve Roden, the American gallery sound-artist sometimes associated with Brandon LaBelle, took a much more gentle approach. Unassuming, he squatted alone in front of his electronic equipment and proceeded to

generate sounds from an unlikely array of contact-miked domestic and natural objects (all locally found) - a glass of water with ice cubes, twigs, stones, and home-made instruments. His abstract films, mostly blue, were projected in extreme slow-motion, leaving us in no doubt that this was the 'chill-out' section of the evening. His sounds were gentle rattling and throbbing noises, but very insistent, and constantly changing - starting from something like an alien swamp of tiny frogs, and layers of sounds accruing and dropping away. The use of twigs (trembled gently for a crisp rattling sound) and stones (clacking) reminds one of Jeph Jerman, and indeed Roden achieved the same serene sense of meditating in a Zen garden of sound. The audience remained quiet and respectful, as though spellbound in a chapel of worship.

Carten Nicolai, under his Alva Noto stage name, brought first evening to a close with a solo turn that was loud, devastating, and brutal. Thin and garbed in black, he struck a pose squatting over his laptop that an SAS officer would have been proud of - arrogant, aggressive, and purposeful. He punched out digital samples and operated his mixing desk with the steady, alert gaze of The Terminator. This produced a long and relentless set of continually pounding, rhythmical art-techno, starting out with fierce clean tones, then moving into a machine-gun rhythm that was vicious and painful. Batter-batter-batter. Crackle-wheeze. The visuals were equally merciless, a bit like Liz Rhodes' famous 1970s Light Music movie, harsh geometric shapes flashing in strobe-like effects that induce epilepsy in nothing flat. With all four screens dancing away, it was sensory overload; the audience nodded their heads like toy dogs, trying to get 'into' the 'funky' beat, but they ended up lost in a numbed stupor. A real case of minimal elements delivered at maximal volume. I got the sense that Nicolai had at his disposal a very simple grid or matrix of elements stored in his laptop, which (when manipulated by his systems) he could easily compress or expand as he saw fit. But where was he taking it? A grand and splendid noise, but ultimately stuck in neutral.

18 October - Philip Jeck / [the user] / Mirror with Phantom Engineer / Sunburned Hand of the Man

Saturday night - a sold-out evening - saw Philip Jeck take the stage with no less than 8 dansettes, 3 other turntables, his mixing desk and his mini sampling Casio. His own home-made movies were derived from a fibre-optic lamp, and a rotating record-label in close up - the latter I thought was a washing machine in slow motion, so successfully had he degraded the camcorder image! It was a treat to hear this music which I enjoy so much at home, but performed live it has a subtly different dynamic, and becomes a little less intimate through being shared with an audience. Record players are carefully adjusted, but most of the work appeared to be done at the mixing desk, producing a seamless, continually shifting tapestry of sonic shapes. The control he exerted was evident from the way the music could turn on a hair - and the occasional clarity that allowed the listener to separate one source from another. Snatches of voices, stuck grooves popping, crackles and creaks, the clarinet of an old swing band, choirs, noise, a wobbly deep sitar; then phantom sounds, not coming from records at all but arising from the overall combined effect, such as flames, disasters, underwater singing. As he performed, the interested audience appeared to probe Jeck as though he were an insect in a box, using their digital cameras. He moved like a slow-motion DJ, a grandad pottering in the garden shed, jerking the arms of his turntables spasmodically. Yet he still pulls tremendous energy from these old records, sharing it with the audience rather than directing it towards them like a series of projectiles. Time-travel through vinyl - it may be possible.

[The user] are a duo of art sound performers who took the opportunity to stage 'Silophone'. This high-concept idea involved a grain silo in Montréal Canada, used as part of the performance, a 'remote musical instrument', linked to the stage in Dundee with an ISDN between two PA systems. This meant that whatever noise they made in Dundee would be echoed and amplified in the huge silo in Canada, then played back to us over the PA system. The sound of a single drop of water in Scotland was soon relayed back to us a cavernous echoing roar from Montréal. Great idea - dull listening. This was simply process art on a grand scale; and not very engaging to listen to. The performers worked mostly with their laptops and microphones, but generated half-baked sounds using wineglasses, water, and tapping drumsticks on the side of the side of the desk. These brief percussive moments - including one point where they appeared to be emulating Steve Reich - were about the one concession to conventional music-making, and weren't very satisfying - very underplayed, and they weren't actually using musical instruments. Hitting the side of a desk is not the same as beating a drum - it's an inert unresponsive piece of wood. The initially exciting roar of the echoing space was soon lost, as the piece descended into vague Ambient-like dullness. No tension in the work at all, and one wonders why they went to all the trouble of setting it up - presumably it wasn't exactly cheap to get this ISDN installation in place. Frankly, the visual component was vaguely more interesting, a computer readout which showed peaks and troughs of the soundwaves as they travelled back and forth across the globe. I tried hard to read these as stained glass windows (they appeared in primary colours) so I could appreciate the sound environment as a vast, echoing cathedral. But ultimately it lacked that grandeur. Photographs showed us the exterior of locale in Canada; yet I didn't get any sense whatsoever of 'place', or the 'truth' of this location; indeed it simply showed how dull the world can be when we wear these blinkers, and apprehend its beauty solely through the cold unfeeling prism of technology. About this point I noticed how many digital cameras and mobile phones there were in the audience, and realised I'm in a minority.

A chilling episode came up next. Mirror were Christoph Heemann playing a programme of CDs, Andrew Chalk on accordion and clarinet, joined by a trio called Phantom Engineer - 2 guitarists and a drummer. A surprisingly effective combo, performing live to the notorious Haxan movie, a Swedish silent classic by Benjamin Christensen from 1922 which is a favourite among transgressive weirdness fans everywhere, due to a later version with William Burroughs voiceover. The film is undescribable - following an unsettling nightmare logic and filled with genuinely disturbing images of demons and satanic practices that are the last thing you want to see on a dark Saturday night in Scotland. The music from the 5 piece was mostly sympathetic to the narrative, sustaining for the most part a droning, ceremonial feel through cymbals, scraped percussion, bowed guitars, controlled feedback, live electronics and sound effects like bells; the accordion and clarinet also did much to keep the 'atmospheric' mood going. They reserved their most intensive playing for all the 'juicy' moments in the film - the drummer providing much pounding excitement as a witch is sentenced to burn on screen, and then going completely nutsoid for the witches' Sabbath sequences. These were the most terrifying parts of the movie and the musicians responded in kind, with effective insane guitar drones and a general sensation of 'ultra-doom' pervading every conscious moment. As a performance, it just about managed to engage the interest for over one hour (which the length of the film demanded), and though it did sag somewhat in places it was about the most successful experiment of this kind I've seen; there have been a few similar shows mounted at the South Bank Centre which have misfired badly. The piece ended with chiming bells of doom not far from the first Black Sabbath LP - they may even have been samples from that record.

Sunburned Hand of the Man - the underground American combo from New England - closed the evening and were probably the reason for the sell-out that night, due to word of mouth and connections. They sure were a crowd-pleaser - over one hour of insane, frenzied and tribalistic noise. A shambolic

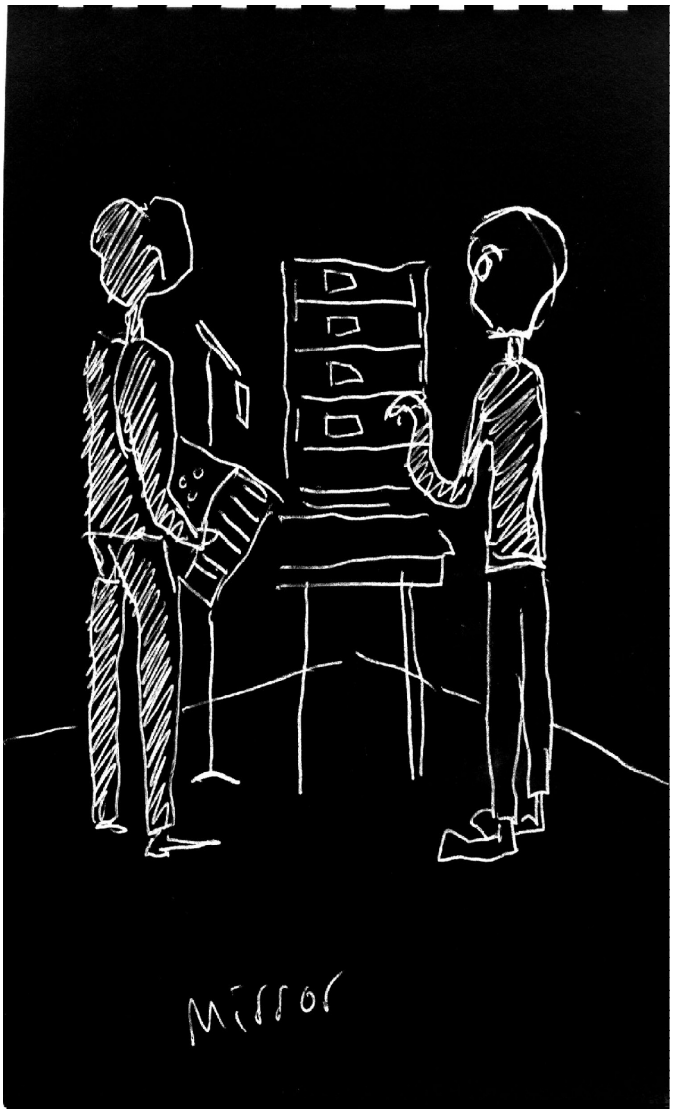
start - most of the band were already on stage and working out - Marc Orleans, the guitarist, wearing a green wrestling mask and adding fuel to the Magic Band comparisons - when John Moloney, singer and charismatic 'leader', came roaring in like a drunken Hemingway, fighting to the front of the stage and shouting 'Join us! Join us!' to the massed throng. One long set followed - very simple but effective thumpy jamming, from two drummers, 2 guitars, a bass guitar, a hairy loon on synth, one guy blowing a sax, one girl blowing a penny whistle and everyone seizing whatever percussion instruments came to hand to keep the tribal beat going. Moloney held his big red bass drum over his head and pounded it much like a butcher carves meat. Chris Corsano, one part of the very reliable rhythm section, gaffa-taped himself to his own kit with red tape. As they ploughed on through their loose, crazy musical terrain, journalist's comparisons came thick and fast - krautrock, cosmic, progressive, pseudo-ethnic, just plain bizarre, all inadequate terms for the madness taking place before one's eyes - the stage became a battleground, each man fighting like monkeys for drum sticks, shakers, tambourines, meandering and stomping about like cavemen. The crowd absolutely loved it, because after all what's not to like about something so direct? They make No Neck Blues Band look 'arty' and make Borbetomagus sound like jazz. For an encore, Moloney led his men from behind the drum kit - he could barely play in time but still managed to march them through a stuttering rhythm. The good players - and it's hard to tell exactly who they are - can plug into the vibe real fast, and once they get it going they hold it there in a steady pumping action. Moloney grunted into the mic with howls and caveman gibbering. Left auditorium feeling like I had witnessed an uncanny experience, but how genuine that is remains to be seen.

19 October - Akaten / Zoffy / Zubi Zuba X / Ruins / Acid Mothers Temple / Phonographics Live

Sunday night, and what festival would be complete without some contemporary Japanese music? Ruins arrived eventually, getting off to a late start due to injury causing loss of bass player, but joined by the guitarist from Acid Mothers Temple they proceeded, in high spirits, to remind of us their many past collaborations such as Zubi Zuva X, Akaten and Zoffy, and delivered a spoof mini-music festival. First there was a vocal extemporisation, making a mockery first of jazz scat-singing (if you never heard Japanese guys going 'zoo-be zoo-vah', you ain't lived), opera singing ('Maria! Maria!') and James Brown styled squawking. The audience lapped it up. 'Welcome to Japanese New Music Festival!' joked the musicians, before embarking on another wacky episode where they amplified and sampled their own stage gear, to produce silly pieces like 'Zipper song', 'Toothbrush', 'Camera' and 'Wine' (playing a wine bottle). 15 minutes of giggly unrestrained fun. The two guitarists then launched into a weird wailing and droning affair, making a sort of bagpipe sound with guitars to accompany their unearthly howls - sorta spoof acid-folk prog music, leading into the riff from 'Smoke on the Water' then a crazy free-jazz pastiche rendered from grunts and screams...musical dilettantism at its most enjoyable, or potentially its most irritating...guess you have to be in the mood for it.

Drummer Tatsuya Yoshida returned to the stage and performed a solo Ruins set, filling the place of lost partner with high-tech bass samples. He turned in the crowd-pleasing 'classical medley' followed by the equally outrageous 'progressive rock melody'. In each case, recognisable fragments of melody are stitched together and pounded out in a relentless, high-speed, high-volume workout of pure excess, and played to needle-sharp perfection. Ruins somehow never manage to sound this good or convincing on CD - another band that needs to be live and loud. The hardcore madness of their act is simply thumped into you by the bass drum, as surely as a golden spike is driven into a length of railroad track. Ruins was supposed to have been augmented by visuals from the Brighton-based filmmaker Ian Helliwell, but (although his work was represented in the daytime screenings) I don't think this happened on the night.

A delirious psychedelic set from two Acid Mothers Temple players was the pentultimate entertainment of the festival. Guitarist Kawabata Mokoto played all his trump cards - incredible slide guitar workouts and effortless acid-drenched psych heaviness, laden with excessive pedal effects. This was performed live while fragments of Ira Cohen's famous underground movie, The Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda, was screened on the walls, while Cohen himself (whether pleased or simply bemused by the wild unrestrained music on offer) wandered around making camcorder footage of the event. Acid Mothers Temple can misfire live, but they didn't here - a perfect groove was found and mined relentlessly, and all the PA speakers hopped around liked jumping beans.



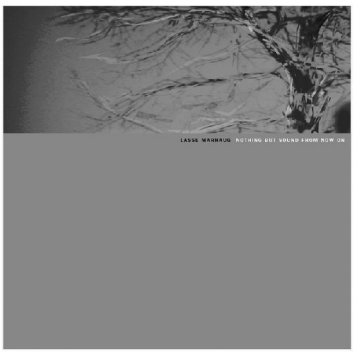
The final set came from Phonographics, a taste of new Viennese music stretching out way beyond the Mego agenda. Effectively the band was Polwechsel - Burkhard Stangl and Martin Siewert, and bass player Werner Dafeldecker, plus Christian Fennesz, with his laptop and mixing desk. All instruments were equally laden with effects, and all players jamming together in a righteous simplistic set of non-linear droning chords. Plucks, drones, whines and sustained looping monotony were the order of the day, all played at a very high volume and moving nowhere fast in a very pleasant circular way. The guitars and their effects were tightly integrated into the whole unit, and Fennesz did not disappoint with his customary full-on resonant chords, crackle and fizzing. This gave the impression of an interesting approach to improvisation, organised vaguely around a single note or a cluster of notes, yet with an extremely open structure which allowed the possibility of lots of free-ranging musical discussion and blue-sky thinking. One idea followed another until they simply ran out of things to say, and stopped. All this took place against a very contrived film show called Film Ist by Gustav Deutsch, which is a multi-screen installation comprising mostly found footage and library films, images juxtaposed with no discernible rhyme or reason, and looped endlessly. I noticed quite a lot of 'eye' imagery, including an eye being removed from its socket in surgery, which I think is something of a gaffe in avant movie circles. But people never learn from the past. To me, this festival was sheer heaven...now if only I could have gotten a good bowl of porridge at my hotel in Dundee, I'd have been totally satisfied!

ED PINSENT 12-2003

Lasse Marhaug

"I'm A Flexible Control-Freak"

This Norwegian musician and sound-artist has been delighting this magazine with his compacted noise-CD projects for a few years now, and some of his latest projects - which are reviewed below - seem to be taking an increasingly surreal, absurdist and mystifying turn, which is an extremely encouraging development in anyone's book. So TSP thought this might be a fairly opportune moment to invite him to spew a few words of wisdom. No sooner had decision been taken than Lasse appeared in chatty interview in America's splendid Bananafish magazine. There he paints picture of a lively and erratic sound-art, music and noise scene in Norway's capital cities (of which there are about 16), where everyone seems to know each other and projects are swapped back and forth within a friendly non-competitive orbit. In the context of this fertile forest, Lasse emerges as a kind of 'Michelin Man' figure - round, friendly, chubby, and able to repel stinging insults from his rubbery torso quite easily. Also, like the Michelin Man, the strange balding Lasse can roll downhill at a fair lick and still get a good grip on the surface with his tyre-like stomach and legs - or at least he could if there were any hills in Norway. Besides his solo projects and numerous collaborations - he's been releasing tapes since the early 1990s - Lasse works fairly regularly with John Hegre as Jazzkammer, whose offering of warm and minimal Pancakes is reviewed below.



Lasse has also lately locked antlers with Tore Honoré Bøe, refugee from the Origami Replika collective, and a man whose multi-dimensional works would need an in-depth study to take into account (and I'm not the man for the job). Together, they form the 'noise-crooner duo' The Nordic Miracle, in which neither of the men sing a single note, nor do they resemble Bing Crosby - apart from the pipe-smoking, of course. The Nordic Miracle is an ambitious name to give your band, suggesting all manner of supernatural capabilities, and as self-aggrandisement goes it's on a par with Sweden's The Son's of God. But then Lasse is no stranger to inviting hubris, as can be discerned from the title of his latest 'roarer' CD, The Shape of Rock to Come. In the interests of drawing together a few Nordic threads, I've attempted to lump all related record reviews in a large indigestible chunk below, but readers should be aware that this represents but the merest smidgen of the wayward, crazyhouse splenetic musical activities currently pouring out of the wonderful land of the fjords. I was also interested enough to try and probe Lasse's methods for creating his noise-like music, and what giddy sensations he might undergo as he performed his mysterious operations - but he appears to be somewhat non-plussed by my interest and unable to articulate much about the process. This I take to be a very healthy artistic reaction to my impertinent, irrelevant and silly line of questioning. After all, when Henri Matisse was making those large-scale paper cutouts towards the end of his life, did anyone ever ask him what kind of scissors he preferred to use? Interview took place by e-mail in December 2003. (EP)

EP The Nordic Miracle... your latest project?

LM Yes. It's my noise-crooner duo with Tore Honoré Bøe. We put on our white shirts, take off our shoes, get on stage and put down some quality old school noise music.

EP How did you and Tore Honoré Bøe decide to work together?

LM Norway is a small country. Everybody making strange music is bound to bump into each other. Tore was involved with Origami Republika and I was making noise and running a tape label. We got in touch and became friends and it started rolling from there.

EP All I have heard of his work is mostly rather quiet, compared to yours!

LM Yes, his solo material of recent years is rather on the quiet side, but he has a long history of making loud music. He's the king of noise from Norway.

EP Can you tell me something about his history and the Origami collective, for my benefit as much as anybody's? I have the impression they have quite a history behind them and are very important.

LM The history of Tore and the Origami Republika deserves an interview on its own. It's a low-profile-high-activity invisible network of 200 people working loosely under an easy media umbrella called Origami Republika, which is divided into some 30-40 fractions doing all kinds of things; music, writing, photography, mail-art and performances.

EP Will The Nordic Miracle be a one-off collaboration, or do you see a future in it?

LM Oh, for sure we will continue, but we're rather expensive to book, so gigs are few and far between.

EP You must be bored with the same old question...is what you do 'noise'? It seems like a lot more is going on than just noise. It's very dense. What do you call it?

LM I'm OK with calling it noise. Sure it's a simple word describing a few more complex musical landscape, but it's an established term, people are used to it, so OK, let's call it noise. I have no strong feelings on how my music is labelled.

EP How do you make it?

LM With cheap equipment and good taste.

EP Your brand of noise is very 'energising' to me... where some noise Ifind depressing and oppressive, yours is uplifting and empowering. I hear Lasse Marhaug and I think I can fly! Why is that?

LM That's a nice compliment. I'm happy to hear so. Making people feel like they can fly is not something I set out to do, but it's certainly a positive effect.

EP What is the appeal of noise anyway? Why do people like to listen to it, at home or on stage?

LM In the same way we like to see, touch, smell and eat what appeals to our senses, we like to listen to sounds the same way. Noise music is intense listening and connects to this. This might sound banal, but I think there's some truth to it.

EP How often do you play live?

LM It varies. About two to five times a month. Sometimes more, sometimes less.

EP Do you enjoy doing it live, or prefer working at home on tape?

LM I enjoy both. Studio is satisfying because of the level of control of the work, and live is satisfying because of the energy. Live you can work with sound on a physical level, which is enjoyable.

EP Is it important for you to have complete control?

LM I don't think there is such a thing as complete control. But as much as possible is desired. I'm a flexible control freak.

EP What equipment do you need to do it live?

LM Computer, contact microphones, guitar effect pedals, turntables, CD-, MiniDisc- or cassette-players. With DEL I play guitar. Nothing very exciting. In the earlydays I used to go on stage and smash things, which I probably should go back to.

EP Does what you do arise from a system, or composition, or from total chaos?

LM I wish I could work from total chaos, that would be fantastic. With Jazzkammer, DEL and the various collaborations it's nearly always what you would call improvised. Solo I mostly perform composed pieces. But it never sounds the same, it's different every night, and I'll change parts, so over time the piece mutates into something new.

EP Are you an improviser?

LM I don't really like to think of myself as an improvisor, although I improvise and play with improv artists quite a bit. This is mostly because I find I have a different motivation than the improvisors; in that I'm not as interested in my playing as the experience of the audience. Of course the experience relies on my skills as a player, but it's not the focus as I sometimes feel it is with many of the so-called improvisors I've encountered. What is improvisation anyway? You're always playing from memory; past experiences, so it's never truly improvised. If you've never touched the instrument before, now that would be improvised music. The truest improv musican I feel is Miguel Tomasin of Reynols, he seems to be able to play almost completely free, totally in the moment. There's a recording where he plays the saxophone for the first time. It's a sort of cheap plastic saxophone for kids, but when he plays it he's like Coltrane.

EP Tell me your history of being a maker of cassette tapes, to producing CDs. Did you get involved with some kind of tape network? What about the history of the labels Jazzassin Records and Smalltown Supersound - are you involved with those?

LM I started putting out cassettes in the early 90s. I didn't call them anything or put them out as a label, they were just titled demo 1, 2, 3 etc. They were done with cheap xerox covers and bizarre cover art. I used lots of different project names. In 1994 I started the cassette label TWR Tapes, putting out other artists as well material under my own name. I also did some DAT compilations, which must be the most obscure format ever for releases. Then I started Jazzassin Records in early 1996, which was the vinyl and CD sister label of TWR. I did 17 releases until I lay it dead in 2001.

EP And Smalltown Supersound?

LM Smalltown Supersound is run by Joakim Haugland. It also started with cassette tapes, but has now grown into quite a successful business. Joakim is a hard worker, he lives for the label, I could never work up the enthusiasm to make Jazzassin run as a 'proper' label. I just wanted to have fun and put out some weird records.

EP The CD compilation Good Music is a great collection. Are you a leader or a follower in the Norway 'scene'? Is there indeed a scene, and if so what does it consist of? What is going on?

LM Like everywhere else, it's just people being active and doing things to escape boredom. *Good Music* disc was put together as a showcase of four projects in 2000. If speaking of a Norwegian scene, I think there's some interesting activity going on. But there is also a lot of bad music coming from Norway. Often selling on an exotic 'arctic cool'. I think it's bland, lazy music. Even with the so-called extreme metal music. Many of the Norwegian black metal bands are just bad goth in disguise.

EP The CD of Jazzkammer and Merzbow playing live was a disappointment to me. It seemed both sides were afraid of each other. What went wrong? Was that the best you could do? Or do you think it worked very well and I'm totally mistaken?

LM I hope you don't think I would release it if I didn't feel 100% for it? It's one my favourite Jazzkammer discs. I'm totally happy with how it sounds. We weren't afraid of each other. It wasn't really improvised, we 'rehearsed' the day before, so it's sort of semi-composed. But I agree it's a lesser Merzbow record, he's best on his own. But it's a good Jazzkammer album, and at least we didn't totally mess up Masami's magic, like the

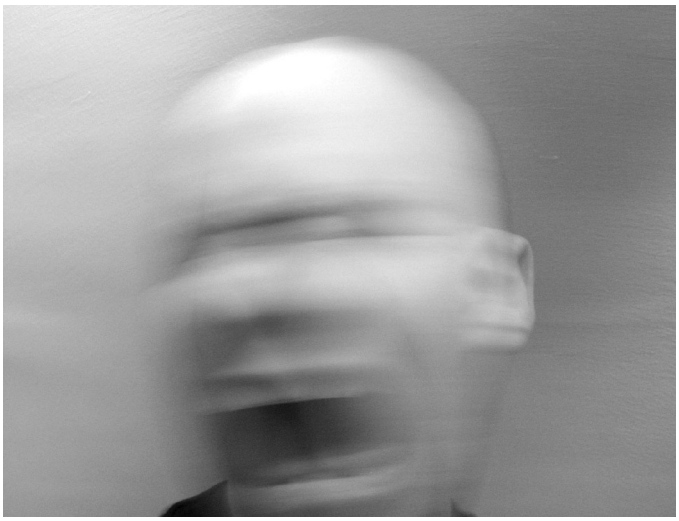
ones with Mike Patton and Alec Empire.

EP So many remix CDs are absolutely awful. Yet JAZZKAMMER ROLEX works very well. How did you achieve such a successful mix?

LM Our approach was exactly that; most remix CDs are awful, let's try to make a good one. First thing was to invite good people who would hopefully do good work. They all did. Then we tried to assemble it in a fashion that works as a whole. This was done with careful consideration; I listened to those mixes maybe a hundred times before I put it in running order.

EP Can you tell me a little history of some of the more 'obscure' names on that CD, like TV Pow and Alexander Rishaug?

LM Alexander is a friend of mine here from Norway. He's been around making music for quite a while. He has one album on Smalltown Supersound called *Panorama*. He's also a member of the electro-improv trio Arm, which after years of delay finally have their debut album out on Melektronikk. Me and Alexander have a duo called Rishaug Marhaug. TV Pow is a laptop-trio from Chicago, they've also been around for years, and have a huge catalogue of releases, of which their collaboration with Stilluppsteypa on Erstwhile is in my humble opinion a highlight. Jazzkammer did a collaboration with them when we were in Chicago, but we couldn't fill Stilluppsteypa's shoes.



EP Do you know anything about Ronnie Sundin? His work is very mysterious to me and very enjoyable. I wondered if you'd ever met him or worked with him, or if you can relate anything to me of his strange actions and work.

LM Ronnie is a good friend of mine. He sent me an tape of amazing sounds in '96, and we've been in touch since. In '98-'99 he lived in Trondheim for a year, and we did a lot of recordings together. Ronnie is one of the best sound artists working in Scandinavia at the moment. He gets far too little recognition for what he does. But he likes to keep a low profile and is modest in promoting himself. He's also extremely critical of his own work. Recently he has been drawing comics about his experiences with meeting people in the experimental music scene.

EP Do you have anything to do with sleeve designs for your CDs? The artwork for the CDs I have is interesting in that it's so bland and empty, almost like wallpaper, though with hidden patterns and details in tiny fragments of images - it seems totally at odds with the wild content of the music. Were your cassette covers any different? What were they like? Is visual communication important to you?

LM I'm a graphic designer so I place great importance upon the design. It's an important part of presenting the music, and what makes records so interesting. I don't like to give things away with the visuals. It shouldn't be too obvious. With Jazzkammer I tend to design our record covers opposite to how the music sounds; like the loud *Sound of Music* and *Rolex* with its cold and sparse visuals, but the musically austere *Pancakes* was given a loud punk rock cover. The contrast makes it interesting. I spend a lot of time designing the covers, sometimes too long – I find it harder to let got of a design than a recording, because music is abstract, it changes with the listening situation, while graphics are in a way concrete. It is what is printed on the paper. I know other designer-musicians who has it the other way around. My old cassette covers were more in a punk aesthetic. They were done without computers and xeroxed.

EP What image (if any) do you project on stage?

LM That of a strange bald Norwegian who makes inviting soundscapes.

EP You seem to be the kind of artist that acts first, asks questions later – do you ever edit yourself, edit your tapes? Do you (or would you like to) release everything you record? Do you see any

discipline in what you do?

LM Edit is all I do. Everything is carefully considered. A lot goes in the trash. I would never release anything I couldn't expect anybody to pay for with their hard-earned money. I put out records because I want to present something to others, not to amuse myself, and those records should be at the maximum of my abilities. But I record a lot, I got a lot of ideas in my head and I got to try them out while they're still there.

EP What do you like in the world of music - past or present?

LM Anything with a good melody and a steady beat.

EP Did music inspire you to start making your own tapes, or was it simply the business of working with a tape recorder?

LM I was a boy excited by tape recorders and turntables. I didn't think of it as music, as I had no ideas or goals about musical structure or composing. I simply liked what happened when I pushed the buttons, slowed the records down and twisted the sound. I found pleasure in using something in a way it wasn't supposed to be used. But I related to the music medium as a frame, and started putting out cassettes of my experiments.

EP Can you share some of your tastes in art, literature and movies?

LM I watch a lot movies and I read a lot of magazines, books and comics. Cinema is the artform closest to me as that's what I discovered first. I grew up in front of the TV watching horror, sci-fi and kung-fu movies.

EP What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you playing your music live? When did this happen?

LM Except bad sound-systems I've never really had any truly bad experiences. When I was in Origami Replika and did Lasse Marhaug Band I experienced a fair amount of on-stage violence

from fellow band members, but it was all in good spirits.

EP What can make a musician better?

LM To listen more.

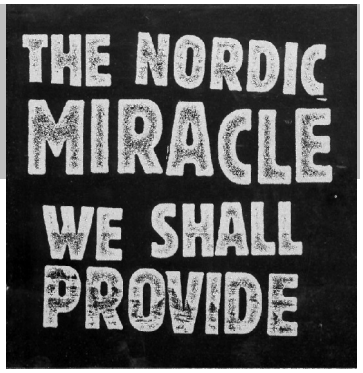
EP Is this a good time to be making music?

LM Yes, these are pretty exciting times. And music is needed, more than ever.

Web sites:

www.lassemarhaug.no
www.jazzkammer.com
www.looop.no/del
www.kunst.no/origami

Some Record Reviews...



The Nordic Miracle

We Shall Provide
NORWAY HUMBUG 009
CD (2002)

This CD has a subtle bit of typography on cover where letters are slightly dislodged out of place as though jolted by an earthquake of noise, and they're also burnished as though scorched by a roaring flame of noise. Contents of CD pretty much match this promise. Music roars continuously in very dense way, colliding huge awkward shapes together like so much scrap metal suspended on chains - but listen carefully and find it's worked out of quite complex samples and controlled screaming sounds, and very brilliant layers of manipulated electronic effects. Nothing so very destructive going on here really, since as I've always said Marhaug's brand of noise (as evidenced in any of the projects he's been associated with) is a tremendously joyous one, the roar of the crowd at the funfair as they scream with delight among the fearsome machines that are eating them up. The Nordic Miracle is a new project - Lasse Marhaug 'noising it up' with the famous Tore Honoré Bøe, and their brief history describes how they have spawned themselves out of 'dead noise projects like Origami Replika, Sultans Of Swing, Lasse Marhaug Band, Climax Of Copenhagen and Herb Mullin'. Hard to believe Bøe is part of the otherwise quite respectable Origami collective, or that he once made an exceptionally quiet record called Siesta. As a duo they've already existed long enough to belch out these three live recordings, which they claim are 'based on unique themes for every performance, stretching from J S Bach to George Harrison.' These refs to history of music are totally ironic, of course - indeed third track 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' starts off with a sampled voice saying 'May there be peace and love', setting the scene for the sort of gentle hippy ideals which Harrison would no doubt embrace, only to lay waste the entire auditorium with insane explosions, reverberating blasts, and sanding machinery. A fairly caustic debunking of the hippy dream there, and (since Bach comes in for flak also) classical music too and - well, just about every other form of music that ever existed. Good thing too. Real abandon - you've rarely heard such fun-loving guys delighting so much in the very process of 'noising'. Children

at play in sand pit.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Anders Gjerde, Bomloveien 20, N-4029, Stavanger, Norway
tchartan@online.no

Jazzkammer

Pancakes

NORWAY SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND STS064 CD (2002)

This is Lasse Marhaug with sparring partner John Hegre, with a little assist from Alexander Rishaug. Jazzkammer have been responsible for some of the finest noise-assaults ever to have reached us from the Northerly climes, so it's extremely interesting to discover this other quieter side to their activities. Taken at one sitting, Pancakes is like experiencing the vicissitudes of one month's worth of fine Nordic weather, with its icy cold, howling winds, and sunless nights. One has rarely felt so 'shut in' by a piece of musical work - cabin fever ahoy. 'No Place Like Home' sets the agenda, with a brief flurry of abstract noise at the start, then - what? Virtual silence for a good ten minutes - punctuated only a distant moaning, that might be the howling of hungry wolves, or ambulance sirens rescuing frostbite victims from the snowdrifts. 'Vet Ikke' follows, recreating in sonic terms the effect of sub-zero winds rattling the double-glazing of your cabin, and reminding you of your precarious existence when pitched against such wild forces of nature. Who will win? The closed-in, slightly eerie feeling starts to descend upon you.

Pancakes maintains its steady, insistent minimal outline and makes no concessions to your normal desires. The gentle electronic throbs of 'Random Lung' are like hearing your own circulatory system pumping in your ears. You may not detect you're having a heart attack until you drop dead and it's too late. Tiny, high-pitched flutterings and the gradual emergence of vague, tune-like tones in the background replicate the effect of lying in a hospital bed. On 'Oolong', a troupe of miniature gnomes belch little puffs of smoke from out of their caps. Then, their plumbing starts to seriously malfunction. This strange and unsettling episode glides naturally into 'Tape Out', which returns us to the windy night in the cabin, where we find the storm outside has become slightly more troublesome - weather systems filled with debris - crackles and pops fly around in a tiny blizzard of whistling. 'Pancakes' is perhaps the most dense track on offer, with engaging whistling electronic drones and multiple textured sound effects for added interest. Finally, 'Your Disc Is Ready' is a simple low throbbing tone with bird-like twittering calls and tiny chime effects; like hearing the generator for your log cabin purring away in the distance. In short, there's enough icy-landscape vistas here to lose yourself in, permanently. And you'll go snowblind besides. An extremely enigmatic set, this repays close attention and repeated listenings before it yields its secrets; it's almost as 'blank' as a snowy landscape.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

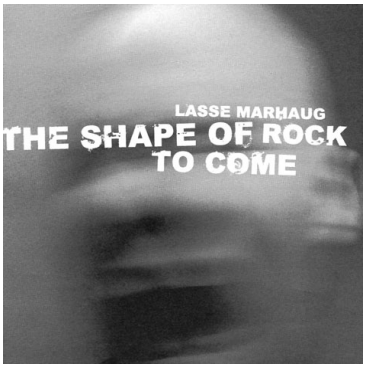
PO Box 2069, Grunerlokka, 0505 Oslo, Norway
www.smalltownsupersound.com
info@smalltownsupersound.com

Lasse Marhaug

The Shape of Rock to Come

NORWAY SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND STS084 CD (2004)

The title here might allude to Ornette Coleman's 1959 LP The Shape of Jazz to Come, a title which I think was singled out for attack at the time by mean-minded critics as somewhat pretentious, or at least unfortunate; how could Coleman's music possibly live up to that promise? He was frequently one of the most misunderstood jazz composers of the time and critics probably couldn't wait for him to take a fall. Marhaug - who made this solo CD using computer, electronics and guitar - no doubt has his tongue planted in cheek as he uses this allusive title, yet there's a lot of guitar and guitar samples on this excessively noisy CD, and it would be convenient to place it within orbit of Merzbow's latest rock-like digital offerings and certain strains of Mego activity, all of which offer viable and economical alternatives to forming silly rock bands with guitars, drum and bass. Either way, one wishes that more contemporary rock musicians would apply the same imagination, invention, taste, intelligence and sheer delight in visceral noise that's in evidence here. Five tracks, leading off with the long cut 'Sleeper', which proposes a skipping looped beat as a framework for feedback howls, screeches, car crashes and motorway pile-ups. The skipping beat is intolerable - the aural equivalent of having your fingers lopped off with shears, joint by joint. The music builds up into a goodly, ferocious metallic roar - you can almost taste the iron filings in your mouth - with a sound as brittle as sheet ice. It crescendoes with a healthy dose of 'classic' Marhaug complex noise-clouding, something like a contact mic in a tumble dryer full of gravel and rubble. An ominous mood pervades for all 20 minutes - if this is a 'Sleeper', then it must be Magritte's 'Restless Sleeper', passing 'une nuit blanche' as the French say.

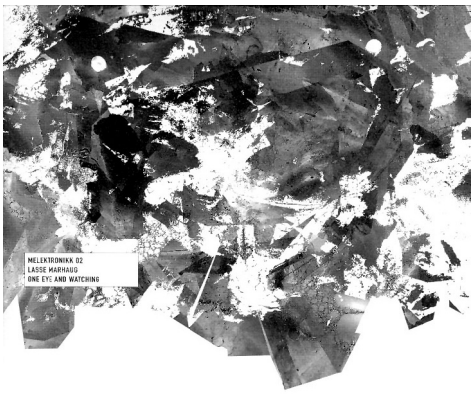


'Magmadiver' also starts out with a hard-to-digest opening salvo, static bursts that are somehow stringy and unpleasant, like a salad made of seaweed; but it soon develops into an excellent oscillating nightmare. Spinning UFOs make their way through a space storm. Amazing sensations pass through the head as you endure this perilous journey; a truly vertiginous episode and oddly uplifting. 'All In Good Spirits' is the most out-and-out heavy-metal influenced track, with its grotesquely overblown guitar chords stretched and amplified into huge proportions, almost like a cosmic bridge across the stars. Loud, soaring, unstoppable forces are pitched headlong against evil, chuntering rhythms. This one isn't far from Merzbow's soundworld in its use of looped rhythms, but not quite as ruthless as our Japanese friend; it's also fair to say that Marhaug is somehow more eccentricly weird than Masami, or indeed many of his other competitors. Perhaps it's the obvious good humour and approachable friendliness with which he sets about wreaking his sonic havoc; he may not take himself too seriously.

That said, 'Headless Piss' is laced with a certain surreal malevolence; it's a woozy, almost drunken hum-drone affair, with the surface roughed-up by static, fizz, hiss and overall spikiness. It comes across as a psychic beating-up for your face and head, and none shall escape unbruised. Finally, comes 'It is My Kind of Top', which uses a borrowed guitar sample from Snorre Ruch and Moonfog Productions (whatever they may be) and resembles a sort of 'darker' version of Fennesz, with its looped chords and filtering effects. It's soon concluded by Marhaug's 'signature' roaring effect, which here resembles nothing short of steel cannonballs fired from a particle accelerator. Splinters of tree-shattering shrapnel flying everywhere; don helmets, men. Decorated with a sleeve that looks non-descript, but turns out to be a blurred photo of Marhaug delivering an agonised scream. Recommended to lovers of surreal and exhilarating noise everywhere.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

PO Box 2069, Grunerlokka, 0505 Oslo, Norway
www.smalltownsupersound.com
info@smalltownsupersound.com



Lasse Marhaug

One Eye and Watching

NORWAY MELEKTRONIKK 02 7" VINYL SINGLE (2001)

Number 02 in the Melektronikk series released by the Safe as Milk label. This one sees Lasse M forsake his usual whole-hearted noise assault, and make his obvious (although highly idiosyncratic) compositional skills somewhat more prominently noticeable. In fact there are so many good ideas packed into this tiny slice of vinyl (recorded in Trondheim in 2000-2001) that

it's almost a mini-album. Lasse restrains himself by veering away from the roaring, pounding racket of full electronic howl and limiting himself to a diet of worms - a few samples, a few electronic beeps, some hoover noises and whatever effects or treatments seem appropriate. The A side, 'One eye and watching', starts off with a growling undercurrent of gentle menace, as though a ten-foot giant thug has wandered into the room and judging from his aspect you're not sure whether to hug him, or run for cover. A set of nice, sharp surgical tools appear from nowhere. Someone might be using them on your pink body. Then a vat of boiling fluids is wheeled into the theatre - might be a magic potion, a gallon of good medicine, or even the hospital lunch. On top of this gentle background, Lasse suddenly breaks in to construct a strange edifice - something like a greenhouse that you can't see through - using large sheets of shatterproof acrylic made of bright colours. Without completing it, he disappears again, leaving us contemplating the boiling vat. Well, so much for side one. Side two sees Lasse - or perhaps his airline-pilot doppelganger - catching flying embers in his large orange paw, and squeezing them into diamonds using super-pressure. Next door to his flat is a trolleybus going around on tracks in an endless loop, built of bricolage. Suddenly, dreamlike, we shift to the next episode...a soaring airplane ride in the night, where the sole passenger is invaded by microscopic toadettes. And the story is only just beginning. If this is 'safe as milk', they must lace the old moloko with unusual substances in Norway...recommended for lovers of surreal, imaginative electronica everywhere. I'd be the first to buy an entire LP of this, should Marhaug choose to pursue this direction.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Andreas Meland, Carl Grøndahlsv 11, 0871 Oslo, Norway
info@safe-as-milk.org
www.safe-as-milk.org

Tore Honoré Bøe

Solvstoy

NORWAY MELEKTRONIKK 01 7" VINYL SINGLE (2001)

A nifty 45 rpm artefact from this most celebrated Nordic man, who is already the stuff of legend...but what a mystifying and subtle piece of sound it be. As much a document of the atmospheric conditions prevailing within a live environment, as it is a document of his (very minimal) performance. If at all. This 'Opus for silver cutlery and magnetofon and neon light' was recorded by Alexander Rishaug in two venues in Oslo, during one of Bøe's tours of 2000. What you hear is a slight metal clinking - presumably the man rattling his knives and forks in a very discreet way - over a very light and airy but extremely conspicuous drone. Why draw anyone's attention to these things? It's all very odd. Bøe must share the same absurdist view of the universe as his worthy compadre Lasse Marhauag that's for sure!

ED PINSENT 12-2003

Andreas Meland, Carl Grøndahlsv 11, 0871 Oslo, Norway
info@safe-as-milk.org
www.safe-as-milk.org

Fe-Mail

Syklubb fra Haelvete

NORWAY TV5 # 2 VINYL LP (2003)

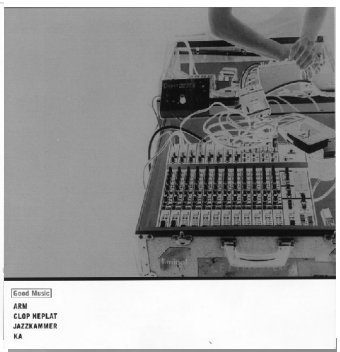
Boy, is my visage violet! Ignored this LP for some months, based on silly prejudices incited by cover which led me to believe it might be some Eurotrashy ironic disco-song Karaoke duo, but then I read that Lasse Marhaug regards this duo as 'the best noise band active in Norway right now'. So I cleaned my glasses for a better look, slipped pink vinyl out of lubricated sleeve and slammed it on turntable. Turns out to be noise indeed,

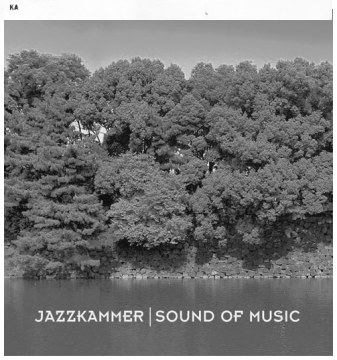
and something of a corker...eight tracks of extremely full-on, activated, vitamin-drenched and varied noise, and though not averse to a meaty loud volume it's mostly delivered with a very understated power, a real fist of stone in a glove of cotton wool. Maja Ratke and Hild Sofie Tafjord are described as 'a harsh and playful noise duo' - I perceive them as women taking on a traditionally 'masculinist' genre and teaching 'the boys' a thing or two, making music brilliantly with a lot of invention and creative energy. Some of it starts off with acoustic instruments - panpipes, harmonicas, flutes, which are reprocessed with electronic effects into huge parade balloons of noise, but not so excessively treated that the original sounds are effaced altogether. What a pleasing combination, to have these melodic voices, this wheezing harmonica and those ethereal horns subtly mixed together with the usual pounding, roaring noise and colliding sheets of feedback. Like finding a small Noisette chocolate in the same mouthful as a searing-hot Malaysian curry. This oddity fairly gallops, squeals and sings. Both girls are well-respected in the Norway scene with impressive solo careers, Ratke as a composer and vocalist, and Tafjord as a free improvising jazz player, and also perform as SPUNK on the Rune Grammofon label. Both have collaborated with Merzbow, Lasse Marhaug, Sachiko M, Evan Parker and more besides. The work on this record is remarkable - treatments with a real lightness of touch, as opposed to the heavy-handed table noise we have come to expect from many sweaty noise guys, and with a sinewy strength at the core of it. To listen is to wrestle with giant serpents made out of bailing wire. And very sexy serpents too. Take look at cover and you may understand my initial misgivings; girls (talented though they be) look slightly tarty in photo; maybe deliberately so; press release says they look like goddesses. Either way doesn't quite prepare you for fascinating racket concealed within. Investigate.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Sindre Andersen, Vogtsgate 57A, 0477 Oslo, Norway
sindreandersen@hotmail.com
www.tevefem.net

LASSE MARHAUG COVER GALLERY





!! REYNOLS !!

THESE BITERS ARE GROWING MORE *BERSERK*

With Reynols last year, the big buzz spreading all around the UK underground grapevine - at least as far as I could interpret that empty chattering descending from the trees - was the story about the UK leg of their European tour being cancelled, due to their being stopped by HM Customs and sent out of the country as soon as the law allowed. Many proud music-loving Englishmen took this as a personal affront, denied of their dose of freakish outlandish music by the misunderstanding actions of the repressed 'straights', and vowed they would never shop duty-free again as a mark of protest. Some political radicals may have seen parallels between the incident (particularly the detainment side of it) and our treatment of foreign refugees, which disgusts their right-thinking brains until they are asked to give 20p to a windscreen washer at the crossroads. Others, perhaps clinging to some notion of the values of utter freakdom, took it as a sign that even in today's jaded world where everybody has seen everything and even men who collect our bottles for recycling wear body piercings, there is still something that has the power to shock, confuse and threaten the 'establishment' to the extent that it must be denied at all costs. Nobody will know the facts in the case, even if you read the e-mail that went out to all disgruntled Reynolds fans at the time or the heated missives of sympathy that immediately followed it. True, England's customs officials are not known for their consistency or high tolerance levels, but I suspect the truth lay somewhere else and we can read no more into it than we can discern the face of Miguel Tomasin in the night sky.

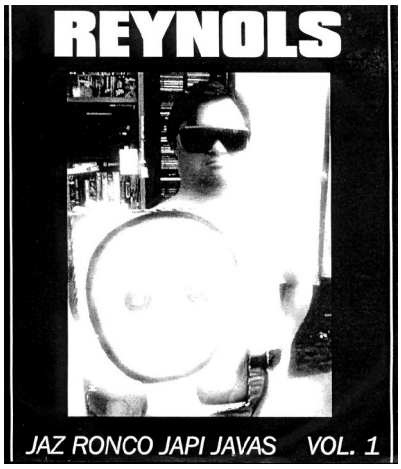
Undaunted, the Reynols machine continues to crank out consumable products at a startling rate of knots - it seems they've finally established their own CD-R label, so you have only to sit back and let the buttons fly as you allow them to rip off your shirt. This profligate self-publishing strategy of theirs - far from uncommon now amongst many marginal artists, I need hardly tell you - serves as a low-grade but extremely efficient way for them to keep fuelling their jaunts around the globe, as each new live appearance is taped, stamped and issued in limited quantities, and served up to the next awaiting audience regardless of how bizarre or untypical the results may be. If you're an undiscriminating hound like myself, you'll probably need to scarf up every single one of these transient droppings from the scales of the back of the Reynols snake. The Reynols record reviews below are contributed by the noted Canadian fiction writer and music critic MEGALO ROBERTS. (EP)

Reynols

Jaz Ronco Japi Javas Vol 1
ARGENTINA VALUBA MAFIFORO
VM-269 CD-R (2002)

The twists and turns of the chains around your neck will eventually throttle you, you and the friendly goose that comes a-calling for a slice of bread. As the webbed feet slowly advance, the only course of action is to hum the magic tunes we learn from the likes of 'Moros Ostros', a charmful wizard brew that emerges from the test-tubes of fertile mothers, or mothers-to-be. This accounts for their strange lumbering walk, and that of their offspring too, who are bright enough to intervene and prevent arguments. The use of the Andino sax makes this possible, even when it's been taught the use of four-letter words. My charm, my Mojo. The leaping fish come from the waterfalls during spawning season - 'Fermo Mogal' is their motto, roughly translating as 'Shut The Door, Homer' in accordance with the famous Bob Dylan rebuke. However, fish find success hard to come buy - even with their golden scales! My pet goose makes a welcome return, not the fellow involved in choking or pregnant mother activity, but renewed by the promise of advertising, an art form which was invented by T S Eliot in the early 19th century. 'Jaz Ronco Mentalimo' was one of many variant forms of commercial promotion employed in days of yore. A renegade Dean Martin would have assisted him in his labours, but he was busy that day. So much for honour among show-biz types.

A halting stop-sign grows legs and wanders out



into middle of road; speaking to passers-by, the only message they can understand is 'Lohr Japi Javas', which they take to mean something concerning their dog on a leash. Or perhaps they need to buy a new leash? It's not clear...the stop sign waves his spindly metal arms, but to no avail. Play-time for my toy soldiers recalls the zones of 'Mamafofles Comlte Yotuan', a sinister affair where the small men made of lead would shed their painted coats in favour of a pelt of molten feathers, but would this transformation alone make them into genuine shaman? The only evidence is to be found in the weather reports.

Sticks, sticks, in the river, and the sicknesses that result from dwelling too close to the polluted water's edge. The old man of the mountain, however, has lived there all his life - quoting map reference 'Ariva Almerica 2012' as proof of purchase - but we don't yet know it is a map reference. In any case, there is no hard evidence that he has lived to the age of 150 years, as he claims - his voice sounds suspiciously younger. Fights break out on the street, but it's only high spirits among the young Pachuchos who ride their 'Recor Wawacon' at speeds in excess of 300 mph. The local Wawacon is a pleasing sight of ethnic naive art, much like the art cars of Texas, but the difference is...these cars can fly! The fat woman opposes me. But it isn't because she's fat. She knows no better and is worried about other things. None the less she remains my 'Trilo Aversario', an adversary with three limbs where her forehead should be. She makes her terrifying movements in slow motion, which makes them all the more effective. There's even savage beauty in the way she slices the heads of the local canards, and we ain't talking duck soup. She places the halter around my neck, and tightens it.

MEGALO ROBERTS

Reynols

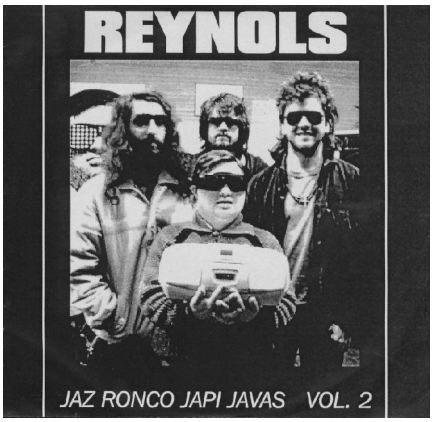
Jaz Ronco Japi Javas Vol 2

ARGENTINA VALUBA MAFIFORO
VM-270 CD-R (2002)

The soap opera is only just beginning...the theme music to this new TV show is 'Apoloca'. The nephew of our hero lies dying in the hospital. Who will supply his needs? Reynols appear at the portals. Miguel Tomasin is holding a small cassette player, The healing forces emanate from each speaker. The young nephew, 12-year old Roberto, rises from the hospital bed to take his revenge. He swears his vengeance upon the dying head of a passing lizard. Where are the hygiene standards? We're not in Polos Moscos any more, Toto. Now comes the funeral of the local mafia boss, 'Roba Pucon'. His henchmen sing his praises as they bear what's left of his dead body above the streets of old New York. A Catholic ceremony. The bones are wrapped in red ribbons. This was an ancient rite buried from medieval England. The dancing girls advance from behind a street corner. Why are they dressed that way in the middle of November? In Australia, the saxophone player in the bush emerges from behind his sacred clump of leaves. He is blowing strange notes that sing of 'Nolan Sitere'. Sydney Nolan was an Australian fine art painter who was the first to celebrate the life and times of Ned Kelly, the famous outlaw. He also painted evocative scenes of the bush. Behind the saxophone player in the bush, marches a procession of carnival freaks, dead aborigines, ten foot-tall giants walking on stilts. The authorities have done their best to prevent this, but it's too late. Next thing you know, Sydney-siders of the homosexual persuasion have formed their own gay parade and attracting thousands of out young men and transvestites to parade their wares on full display. Most of their costumes are yellow. The parade has gone too far. Now a professor is calling matters to order at an academic staff meeting, reading off the minutes of the last meeting. But no-one is listening to him. 'Patriolo Consulte Wohs', is his advice, as he invokes the ancient charter of the venerable college. He lapses into a trance as he recalls the time he spent at the school of Tropical Medicine. Many patients died under his care. It involved heavy violence, except he was not responsible. Those who dwell in the desert have better solutions. They cage wild birds and eat them roasted over slow flames. The flames are purple instead of orange. Only the true wizards of the sand understand how this is possible. Their festivities are soon to be outlawed. 'Helo Baluba' is the greeting given to the police chief. He fails to understand why this is an insult. He should have paid more attention at previous incidents, and he might have better integrated with this wilder segment of his community. Supermarket shoppers, many of whom subsist on free premiums, load free frying pans into their shopping trolley, blissfully unaware of the actual asking price. A local rebel, dressed in the customary red costume, sits in the supermarket aisles and attempts to warn them of their folly. 'Gobia W W' is his subtle warning to these gullible consumers, as he bangs out a rhythm against metal shopping carts. But nobody heeds his sensible advice. Has the world no ears to hear? 'Lavio Peve' is a new sort of bathroom accessory, or perhaps a new approach to washing yourself. The usual method of standing in the shower is replaced by curious activities involving a shovel, slices of fresh cheese, and a clumsy dance-step. Surprisingly, it achieves the desired

affect. The world is radicalised by this new discovery. In heavy traffic, grown skeletons tweak their own bones. Passers-by stop and stare, then convince themselves they have seen all this before. A goose flies past, in formation with his friends, flying south for the winter. 'Maysa' is the country he will visit first. Is the camera running now? At last Reynols may perform. 'Jaz Ronco Mentalimo 2' is their cabaret act, their new karaoke approach to making acoustic free-form jazz music. It swaggers with a sarcastic sneer that pokes fun at all proper jazz music, while allowing Miguel Tomasin to blow free on the Andino Sax. And another great sports season gets underway, at least in those countries that can afford to host the Olympic games.

MEGALO ROBERTS



Reynols

Jaz Ronco Japi Javas Vol 3

ARGENTINA VALUBA MAFIFORO
VM-271 CD-R (2002)

I'm floating through an undersea current made of discarded fruit. My voice is so strangulated I can't hear myself think. The only obsessive thought that keeps me going? I forget. Total strangers ask me for directions. How can I find a way forward myself? The coarse language of television flatly fails to provoke any laughter. 'Vedeosmas,' I cry. Meaning 'Let's go to the supermarket'. The frog sits groaning lying on his belly. Who will overturn his green ass? The visiting Cossack dancers are only here to re-stock on strong Vodka, most likely from Gerry's Wines and Spirits in Soho. They sure execute a nimble step, it has to be said. But what are they doing on the ceiling? 'Flatdas Sutan' is their avowed leader, but even he has no control over their strange antics. They collapse onto a metal tea-tray. They win. I will be in mourning for my entire family one day. Everyone will weep for those they have lost. Then your mute tongue will find the words to express the sorrow you have kept buried for so long. A sympathetic stranger will bang a plastic carton to accompany your plaintive wail. The passing message on a billboard read 'Es Crevite lado uno', meaning 'this split is layered into a single unit', predicting the new split-level home you will buy in California to retire the rest of your days. Arrogant people will push in front of you. But one day the ants and cockroaches will take over the world. They will perform a dance with cellophane, necklaces, and bongos. They will do it on top of an old volcano. 'Supe Alba Samsamrejes' sums up their victory. At primary school, the music teacher manages to throw a metal chair at his opponents who seemed a moment ago to be mocking him. Quelle violence. Moments before, a new piano-player had been tuning up the old instrument covered in cobwebs, causing the ancient janitor to break into song and reveal his hidden genius for wailing. 'Ruibo Encas' was the name of his song, but he didn't realise this. Across the oceans, other pianos were playing the exact same tune, without knowing why. The music teacher now feels quite chagrined. Down on the farm, any farm, a herd of wild horses rushes by in the mist, while cows start bleating instead of mooing. While she's eating the grass, you might say Bossie makes a good lawn-mooer. 'Todo Sabamisa', which means 'All the Meadows in East Sussex', predicts the rise of artificial fertilisers in modern agriculture. Scientific music-boxes are now being deployed to cure most contemporary illnesses, with the exception of those brought on by cyanide or fainting fits. The good doctor explains how to use these new prescriptions. His name is Dr Mantecamio Mada. The success of these nostrums is phenomenal. He becomes a medicine man, a seller of snake oil, while his three assistants pull the wagon and hand out the bottles of tap-water. 'Jraolta Camarion' is a kind of Eldorado, the closest place to heaven on God's own earth, typified by its long low canyons and bathing spheres filled with red jelly. An imaginary kingdom, its reality is slowly becoming harder to ignore as little bits of its promontories jut out from the skies and pierce the Nile Delta below. Only the yawning ape would dare gainsay this reality. We're marching off to 'Contle Mante', a lesser-known segment of the Vietnam war zone where several American soldiers met an untimely death at the hands of coiled spring snakes and other natural life forms. One of these, a black widow spider snake with furry tarantula bird-eating legs in its ears, sang to most of the soldiers with the help of his three assistants who were dressed as fairy-queen gorilla suited anchormen from the news at ten. But just wait till the film at 11. It's called 'Estiban Guane Chorlin', and tells the familiar tale of the prisoners of African insane asylums, forced to declare their own 'tragic mulatto' status while torturing their own livestock to death with second-hand laser guns from the Pinochet regime. Just my normal

working day, pardners. And how was YOUR week?

MEGALO ROBERTS

valubamafiforo@hotmail.com

Reynols / No-Reynols

Rovatino Surido Almericamo

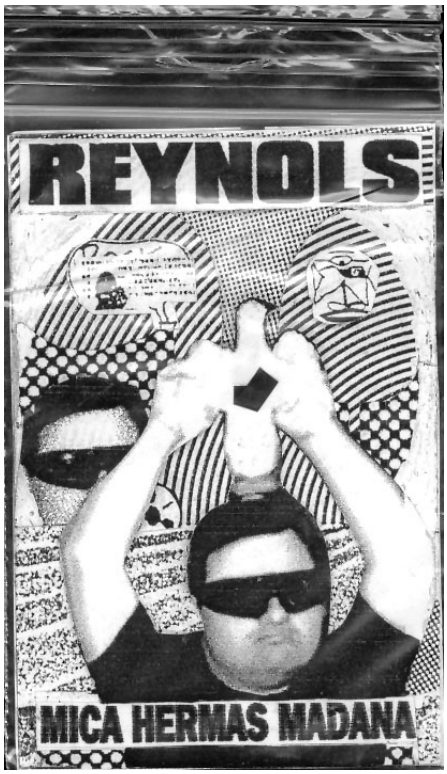
USA THE LAST VISIBLE DOG LVD 04 CD-R (2002)

I'm pleased to note how Reynols No-Reynols are winning all the gay disco competitions currently staged across North America, simply by virtue of their moustache skills alone. The latest prize is a loving cup made of solid steel pancake mix, which they bear aloft like so much apple ordure, due to its tainted status from the hands of the government officials. In a kind of 'Mexican Standoff' affair, the opposing forces of the Reynols team are pitched against their counterparts, No-Reynols. Each team has four members, and I use the word advisedly. Who will possibly win? One recalls 'Negative Man', the DC Comics superhero who was part of the Doom Patrol. It was part of his 'doom' to be parodied as 'Positive Dan' in a Marvel Comics sendup called Not Brand Ecch comics. Here, clearly it's a case of one band satirising the other, but which way around will it be? On my travels, I find it pays to be round in affairs - which no doubt reflects my origins as a wheel-maker. In Glasgow, such people are known as 'wheel-wrights'. The fact of the matter is that Juan Manual Acevedo (the opposing drummer to Miguel Tomasin) can only manage to chant 'Pa' over and over while he drums like a castor-oiled fruitcake on wooden wheels of my own manufacture. This results in two calling-cards - 'Papapapa' for 18 minutes and 'Papapapapa pa' for a further period of 14 minutes. By the time you've finished reading them, your guest has gone home for the night. My two cats both died, but when one was alive she jumped into a plate of mince on her first day; the other one, he simply got lost in the back of the car. Get the picture? The Reynols No-Reynols cat analogy is obvious. They would prefer to think they are dogs, but that cuts no ice with me. 'Borla Lantua 18200' is the address of the full-blown mansion where Reynols - the true Reynols, that is - currently make their abode. A cat managed to get in the attic there and, like the pigeon behind the fireplace, makes a noise click-clacking above the bare floorboards with her claws. It's a sylvian scene in some ways. 'Pepelacho Pepedoto' is the sarcastic riposte of Miguel to the rubber-lipped bleatings of Juan Manuel. Or it could be the opera he's writing, with the help of noted cosmologist Dr A.F. Cortez who is visiting from Milan. It will be an opera about a boat that flies to the moon on wings of gold. This was only recently discovered to be a scientific possibility, albeit a very expensive one. 'Rorh Etunai' demands a substantial refit of your lino flooring. But can you afford it? Most people find they have to move their entire library collection - some 3000 books - before they can even call in the dry rot people. And they don't cure you of dry rot, they give it to you. You need to look out for these people. They look like normal tree roots, only they're shaped like human beings, and they talk only in Dutch (hence Dutch Elm disease). Best of luck in keeping these evil tree-men at bay...I would lend you my dog to help, only he can't stand heights.

MEGALO ROBERTS

PO Box 2631, Providence, RI 02906, USA
lvd_orders@hotmail.com

Reynols



Mica Hermas Madana

VALUBA MAFIFORO VMT-0871 LIMITED AND NUMBERED TAPE FRAGMENT IN A BAG (ND)

If only I could find some practical way of extracting the gold from seawater, we'd all be richer men. This is a cassette tape in a case so thin it makes the mobile phone of my ex-wife / employer (a Doctor whose name can't be given, for pecuniary reasons) look like the side of a barn, neither one of which is an efficient means of communication. This tape is the opposite. It communicates too much. I hear voices, already. What's left of it is an endless tape stretching from here to infinity, yet it's only a few feet long. It has been preserved in pristine state as surely as the holy Catholic host from Father Goinfre's infamous ceremony of 1805 in Padua, and yet has been crumpled to near-oblivion by careless packaging. Dare I play it? Miguel Tomasin holds aloft the dove of Paz, the peace symbol leaping from abstract war-strewn optical art Europe and America, locking horns in an endless search for non-existent terrorist base. Said tape spews from belly of said dove much like childish game my mother used to entertain me with when growing up in Ontario. Nobody is quite sure which way to pull it, or push it, and once released the tape can't be imprisoned back in pristine arrangement when first divined. I'd have been happier to leave it in the envelope than endure any more of this dilemma - it's been five days now and I haven't even left the house in all that time, as I attempt to come to terms with this monster. Mica Hermas Madana obviously refers to one of the stone Madonnas, such as those at Isle de Paclava in the south of France, which you always see coming to life on television and weeping tears from their eggshell face as they behold the sins of the world. DAY SIX: I've now worked out how to re-thread the tape into a blank shell and tested it for about ten hours with a matchstick for a homemade spindle. Will report progress, if I survive.

MEGALO ROBERTS

Reynols

Live in Stavanger

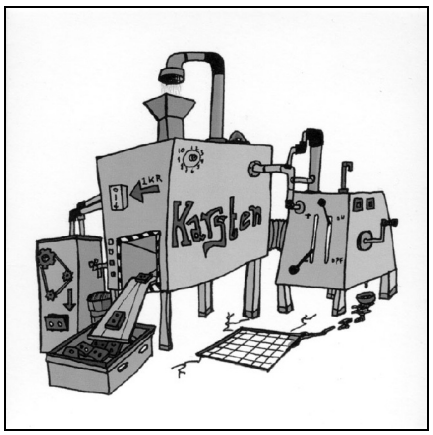
NORWAY HUMBUG 024 CD-R (2003)

Entering the Frankenstein castle, my soggy boots are removed by large claw hammer. The carpenters are sawing the door into three pieces, and tell of strange appearances of gothic bat-like monsters ripped from the pages of another novel. The writer of this nightmare doesn't even know it's happening inside her head, hence the need for a televisual reconstruction of same. These are all the processes by which our valuable imagination gets attenuated, and as a writer of fiction myself (read my latest novel, The Stars Do Kill, still in preparation but out any day through Black Chapel Press) I need to remain aware of these pernicious developments and take measures to protect our assets. A large block of granite needs removal from the brain of the protagonist moth-man before he's able to continue, but even when this imaginary blockage is resolved, the problems still persist. Can anyone discern the cause? The three faces of Reynols float before us in an apparition....they are burning in hell...the lost souls make their return like the Catholic girl trapped on the back cover of an LP which I can't remember, and in any case may never have been actually issued, or even executed as artwork. The dividing line between memory and the weather systems of Canada is hard to disable. Tune into this for 37 minutes of blackened, vile medicinal crudnoise of the first water, recorded by Anders Gjerde in Norway as part of the 2003 tour and jointly issued by his Humbug label and somebody else's Gold Soundz label. I can recommend no better way to lose your head in style draped in black velvet while carrying the coffins of forgotten memory-horseback across the darkened desert wastes of a grim unknown country.

MEGALO ROBERTS

Multifarious Rackets

Pockets of modern experimental music dissected by JONATHAN HELLIER



Karsten Pflum

Tracks

UNITED KINGDOM WORM INTERFACE RECORDINGS WR029 CD (2003)

They tumble and spin like acrobats across broken landscapes: diagonal as a honeyed wristwatch worn at oblique angles to thirteen o'clock.

They park their cars in the disabled spaces even though they're supercapable, totally able, pandimensional auteurs of complete Being.

No irony is lost on them, merely occluded by their softness and receptive awareness. Like a womb, we cannot help but spill our brittle dangers into them, and they cannot help. But they do love us, and will dance.

Who are they?

Well, I'm assuming a plurality, but thinking about it that might be an unnecessary interpretive intrusion on my part. I'm referring to the beats on this juicy blue apple of a recording from Danish ingénue Jacob Madsen, aka Karsten Pflum. Arriving at post-Aphex electronica after journeys through heavy metal and avant-bagpipes, this sweetheart gives us rhythm- and how! 'They' might well be an 'it', inasmuch as what at first presents itself as a squirming beehive of multiple perspectives reveals itself over multiple listens as an uncommonly deep singularity- bit like the coagulation of a new galaxy within the star-nurseries of Melchizedek. And if that sounds a little sombre, a little too Kubrick, well let me reassure you- Pflum's way with a timestretched loop is beguilingly female and warm. You'll find yourself smiling and making shapes in your mind, even as he turns Picasso on you and redraws you with a square head and two noses. Nothing stands still: here blossoms a percussive syntax so nuanced, one can practically hear the shift between past, present and future tenses as Pflum hides the beat in his fist and suddenly grows a million new arms in delighted homage to your favourite Vedic deity. Bewildering as a talking milkshake, but goes down just as smoothly and leaves a perfumed aftertaste which made this listener long for 1983 and its electro-pop raptures without quite knowing why.

Elegiac, modern, delicate, this music trembles and gasps, curdles and glazes. Somewhere between TV test-card soundtracks circa 1974, BBC Radiophonic Workshop soundtracks for Doctor Who (without the overtly sinister bits) and Squarepusher, there's virgin snowfall still to be found. Beautiful synthy chord-scribbles quack and meander perfectly across the blandness; weird medievalisms in a kinda pre-Raphaelite style; emotion teetering on sentimentality, but no more so than Popol Vuh, hence perfectly acceptable; something wants desperately to transcend and to soar aloft, countered by its reflection in the moist pleasures of attachment and lingering in the valley a while longer. I have to say, the emotional playoff enacted in these wordless little vignettes really works for me- unusually so, since they're awfully subtle, and my aesthetic sensibilities are coarsening by the nanosecond. Nice one!

JONATHAN HELLIER

www.worminterface.com
info@worminterface.com
kf@worminterface.com

Satellite Footprint Shop

Liam

AUSTRIA WERKZEUG / MDOS / TROST WRKZG005 CD (2003)

The usual themes are explored in this latest crumb from the bitter, leathery cake of retro-electro bitterness: alienation, neurosis, the modern blankness which assumes an almost maternal aspect to the truly mediocre, so endlessly forgiving and open to repeated infantile projection it has become across ninety-odd years

of tedious hegemony. Here we all are again, then, to watch Eros shrivel as something 'terrifyingly new' grows black frictionless tits and an army of stern, metallic women march down the ramps, jackboots castrating the wet male earth with the grind of each frigid heel. They're marching in unison like it's 1981. I recognise the ennui etched into their faces, the immensely boring necessity of being mechanically cruel to others in a world wherein programming is the new tantra. This record could be construed- if it please you, gentle epicure- as a gourmet selection of betrayals, disappointments, self-loathings and moments of revilement available to the contemporary consumer, portrayed through the medium of turgid third-hand sequencer and synthetic filter riffs. It pays lip-service to late 70s/early 80s industrial/electronic pioneers in precisely the right way, the same way its parent culture pays cannibal homage to late modernism. Mirrors within mirrors, if you like. Or if you don't.

Is 'liking' this kind of thing even the issue, I wonder? It's not there to like- maybe there to buy (they hope), but not to like, I don't imagine. I think to like it would be to miss the point. One might viably choose to admire the arrangement of the sounds: there is a precision involved, and for those who enjoy a mimetic element in art, I should think there're plenty of lonely evenings spent sobbing into your favourite tipple to be had with sLiam as it diffidently enacts how everything's gone down the shitter during the last twenty-five years- politically, artistically, spiritually, it brings any and every level of downer right into your living room, where- let's face it- it really belongs. But other than these rough guidelines, you're on your own with this one in terms of the big questions- Why? For whom? And what next?

JONATHAN HELLIER

www.wrkzg.net
mail@wrkzg.net
satellitefootprintshop@gmx.net

Martin Archer

English Commonflowers

UNITED KINGDOM DISCUS 15CD CD (2002)

New to me, but with an impressive and eclectic musical pedigree encompassing twenty-plus years of innovation and forward-thinking, this recent release on Martin Archer's self-curated Discus label affords the curious listener many pleasurable new paradigms for thinking and feeling via the medium of juxtaposed sound. English Commonflowers consists of nine pieces prepared according to Archer's current working technique: improvised source material which is then electronically processed through various filters; these templates are then genetically fused and interbred to create fantastic chimerae and impossible botanies; then the composer and his jazz mates add coloured splurges of skronk to the resulting nerve-tissues. It's a place where old-skool Improv rubs frottingly up against sequencing technologies- misapplication of said technologies can (and often does) lead to leprous decay of the creative faculties, but trust me, you can approach this music as insouciantly as Mother Teresa might bounce up to the slum-children of darkest Calcutta. 'If I can combine the creative and unexpected elements of that technology with the heat generation of a great improvisor, and apply some interesting 'brakes' by using composed elements…that pretty much gets to where I want to be', quoth Martin. Well, dude, we're right behind you- let's go!

I can clearly hear the compositional techniques working themselves out across the seventy-plus minutes of this recording, but for me that just adds to the experience as I marvel at the composer's good taste (not in a pejorative sense) and ingenuity. The tonal palette is an interesting one- largely constructed around synthetic tides which crash, tinkle, roar and shudder according to some cosmic-Hermetic deep structural code, it is frequently (but never gratuitously) augmented by lashings of trombone, flute, lap steel, alto and tenor sax, clarinet and double bass- not to mention my personal favourite bit, the deranged electric guitar which enters track five, 'Water Grid' like Godzilla rising from the ocean bed and proceeds to shake its jowls nastily across the Santa's-grotto twinkling of Archer's winter synthtones. (Here and elsewhere the electric guitar contributions come courtesy of Benjamin Bartholomew, to whom the album has been dedicated.) I'm given to understand that those in the know will likely hear the influences of Soft Machine, Cluster, Morton Feldman, Evan Parker and probably a host of other beardy-weirdies, though the only thing I picked up on myself was that track four, 'Know', is indeed an eerie homage to Nick Drake, as if a filament of Drake's gorgeous morbidity had become trapped in one of Archer's machines, with unsettlingly beautiful consequences. Other than this, highlights include the seventeen-plus minutes of 'Mall Bunnies', which starts off like 'The Clangers' (plink! plonk! onk!) until Bartholomew's guitar ejaculates death like a flamethrower and the microcultures of glockenspiel and vibraphone begin from scratch. Over the course of the piece this pattern is repeated until we have a conversation between nervously agnostic keyboard and double bass, with the guitar taking the role of exterminating angel and Charlie Collins' flute making a break for the transcendent

sublime, only to have flipped its lid by the end and reduced its lofty ideals to lewd squirmings and helpless lapdancing for cash. Cynics! In a GOOD way! It's really, really entertaining.

Last word to the composer: 'In a world where the post-modern ideal attempts to elucidate style above content…at this point in music history the creative soundsmith will make the heart within any style serve to make an entirely new music'. Which, in your reviewer's humble opinion, is what he has achieved with English Commonflowers.

JONATHAN HELLIER

PO Box 658, Sheffield, S10 3YR UK
www.discus-music.co.uk
huckleberry@discus-music.co.uk

Various Artists

Black Faction - Reworked

POLAND VIVO RECORDS 2002 005CD CD (2002)

I wanted to like this- I did- I tried my best but, God help me, I'm struggling to damn it with the faintest of praise. If I do find anything uncomplicatedly positive to say about it it'll probably sound patronising, and why should I risk hubris so grandly by kidding myself that I'm in a position to comment on anything so clearly the product of a subculture from which I would have chosen to remain alienated (had I even the wherewithal to have registered its existence without having to have it spoonfed me by beings whose cognisance outstrips mine utterly). A compilation CD of various artists remixing original works by Black Faction (aka Andrew Diey, a Manchester-based hierophant of sonoris digitalis), it would be more fitting for this coolly

manifest object to patronise me, especially since (by dint of its superior organisational structure and mature grasp of reality-sequencing morph-codes) it lays greater claim than I ever could to complete incarnation. Hence I have come to believe it actually exists more purely and with greater pandimensional chutzpah than the limited homo sapiens consciousness of your reviewer. Although I do have nice hair, and try hard to be a good person.

If we accept, then, that I am fundamentally mute before the absolute singularity of this project, what I can tell you is that listening to/against/beneath it made me wish I could turn into a little horse and gallop, gallop away from the whole walk-vertically / use-speech way of doing things, gaily abandoning aeons of evolution as unnecessarily naff. 'There's got to be a simpler way' I whinnied as the relentless clickbeats and electroethnoforgeries panned, in perfectly mixed arcs, across my aural field. For all their exquisitely forensic arrangement I could not yield my heart. Too much art-hiss, too much empty technique, it got to be like watching ice-skating or synchronised swimming. Not to suggest there aren't a) some nice melodies, b) some infectious rhythms, c) obvious thought going into the whole package, but- tracks six and seven (by Rapoon and Keith Fullerton Whitman respectively) are the only ones that remain in my mind (and hey, sorry guys, but according to my own internal logic expressed above, that probably means they're the worst ones): no, I thought fleetingly, I no longer require the equine metamorphosis because somebody is feeding me the kind of psychedelic sugar-lumps that make the human cortical system worth the bother. Quite what was different about these two tracks is difficult to pinpoint, except to suggest that perhaps a slight relaxation of the predominant aesthetic of anality, coupled with a willingness to allow the development of pattern-formation throughout the entire length of the track, lends them an agreeably teleological feel- we are being pulled toward some point of futurity, the Gnostic moment lies up ahead, beyond the next veil- and this in its turn creates myriad peripheral sensations (eg depth, movement, paranoia) which help us (or me, at any rate) feel involved with, energetically plugged-into, the music: whereas too often elsewhere the focus seems to be on achieving the opposite effect through zealous use of stasis and repetition in an uncomfortably Samuel Beckett kind of way.

Well, inclined to agree or not, you'll probably have to take my word for it (unless you own one already) as Reworked emerged in 2002 as a limited edition and has since sold out. Sorry, hipsters!

JONATHAN HELLIER

www.alchemyaudiolab.com
www.viva.pl

Strings Arguments

The Encounter

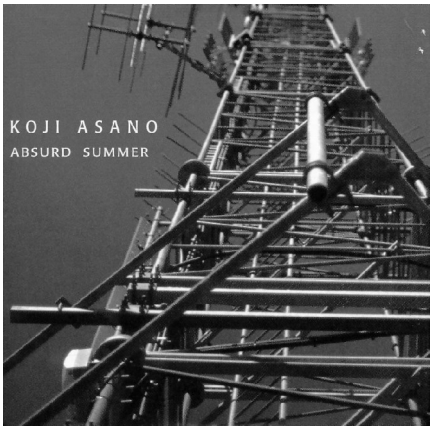
FRANCE MUSEA FGBG 4473 AR CD (2003)

This seemed promising: Japanese ensemble, formed by select alumni from other mysterious schools of Far Eastern free rock-jazz-fusion (Six North, KBB), specially assembled (as far as I can make out) for this project, a live performance

which was recorded in Kyoto during January 2002. Happy to further indulge my ongoing fascination with all things Japanese, I stuck it in the tray and as the music began unravelling itself in long, slow slug trails of glistening violin I fantasised as to the brutal, murderous purpose I hoped to discern within: each highly-trained musical assassin bringing his particular weapons expertise to the blood-feast, yes? Showers of gore! The only way to really get clean, in an age when the filth of compromise seems to spread its stain into every nook and cranny of human endeavour….

But no.

Once again I rush forward prematurely- smeared in the fantasy ordure of my preconceptions and grinning like an ugly child! As the music edged its way toward a full opening into the fairly civilised display of virtuosity on offer- funk-edged, brittle, thorough, like McLaughlin's Shakti minus the lotus flowers but with added pragmatism- my legs flailed beneath me as I ran in mid-air like a cartoon character who failed to spot the approaching cliff-edge. During my subsequent long plummet toward smashing into pieces on the rocks below, it pleasured me mildly to observe the commendable tightness exhibited by Messrs Okamoto, Odajima, Tsuboy, Shima and Matsuda (on guitar, guitar, violin, bass and drums respectively) as they arrange and present their music with such punctiliousness: each family of sub-riffs working as teams-within-a-team in order to maximise and maintain the crucial elements of tension, cohesion and surprise, even as new platforms for individual displays of virtuosic flair are created, seemingly from nowhere, every few seconds. I think the technical term for this would be 'having their cake and eating it'. Yet even as it reaches full velocity (see track 6, the mighty 'Kundabuffer') and the twin guitars are scurrying up the walls like amphetamine spiders- the violin performing perfect cunnilingus upon startled astral beings- at no point does the music lightly eschew its dignity. It walks upright and seems fundamentally to have been predicated around evolutionary ('Progressive'?) modes of thought and action: hence can seem a little humourless and academic at times, perhaps lacking certain visceral and visionary elements one might enjoy in music which more readily engages with a Rimbaldian disorientation of the senses; but then, this is a generic criticism which I personally would apply to much of what passes for 'Progressive' rock and/or jazz fusion. The Encounter does not exempt itself from this collective Achilles' heel, though it does contain passages of anguish, sarcasm and heavy



parsimony which cleanse the palate nicely between each serving of well-mannered, well-thought-out groove-food. Quietly epic in its no-fuss Saturnine way, it kind of wins me over even as it resists me.

JONATHAN HELLIER

Musea, 138 rue des Vallieres, 57070 Metz, France
www.musearecords.com

Omit

Rejector

USA ANOMALOUS RECORDS NOM19 CD 2003

An extremely imaginative and accomplished recording which has the all-too-infrequent effect on me of stimulating a genuine interest and desire to further investigate the work of Clinton Williams, the New Zealand based sonic sculptor working under the Omit banner. My mind's always prepared to flap its thighs apart for Isolationism and her dark ambient cousins- the mid 90s comp on Virgin of that name afforded me some delightedly bleak dives into the inky waters of the nigredo- and while it would be improper and ill-informed of me to suggest any direct causative relationship between those musics and this (since I am not competent to place Omit in the context of its influences), as I wander the turgid labyrinths of Rejector I am nonetheless reminded of happy, corpse-dappled walks by the river Lethe holding hands with KK Null and Thomas Köner. Like Proust with his teacakes, I drift into reverie….

Unremittingly esoteric, here we have thirteen tracks of blanketing, phased-out gloom which bulge and fester decadently into one another; inverting, prolapsing, waxing and waning in protoplasmic, incestuous exchange. Defiantly analogue, these soundscapes are almost flesh: perhaps, like me, you'll manage to lose yourself among their tangled tissues so completely you begin to absorb them into your own body, undulating coarsely along with their abhorrent peristalsis? Ah, it's the best way. Might as well take full advantage of the opportunities on offer here: access to occult trajectories strictly verboten under the terms of consensus reality. These tracks make openings appear where there seemed to be none, and offer dimensional perspectives logic tells us should be impossible, or at least highly improbable. How? Why, through patience, alien wisdom and a masterly knack for filtering, filleting and generally fucking up synthesised drones and pulses, putting Lord-knows-what archaic machines out to stud and breeding them hard! The results are splendid-sinister corridors meander through a structure half-spaceship / half-dungeon, and ambiguous wraiths bid the listener follow- which we do, even though we probably oughtn't. The composite soundfield glistens in all its parts, as though continually secreting a warm, Valium jelly. It breathes like a woman. Check out track 6, 'Isolator', and feel what I mean. The juju sparseness of the beat is All, while translucent squirts of phlegmy synth come purring and crawling around its deep skank, softer than faeces. The effect is startling. Or the title track, where we emerge into full-on sacred-Aum whiteout after a Dantesque journey through intracellular space, only to find a rogue pocket of Burundi zombies has been awaiting our arrival….Everything slowed down to nothing, each heartbeat the dawn of a new aeon….It's here, at this terminus, the small work of genius that is Rejector stands naked before us, in all its somatic beauty and nowhere-to-run horror.

JONATHAN HELLIER

PO Box 22195, Seattle, WA 98122-0195, USA
orders@anomalousrecords.com
www.anomalousrecords.com

Various Artists

Strch Prst Skrz Krk: A compilation of Christchurch Underground Music

NEW ZEALAND KRKRKRK RECORDINGS KRK 127 CD (2002)

Unhappily, Christchurch fails to distinguish itself via this moribund collection as anything other than a graveyard for piss-poor ideas whose time is long past: a less-appealing pot-pourri of stinky unlistenability would be quite something. Here we go again, I know- it's my juvescent projections boomeranging back to twat me upside the head- investing the idea of secret chambers in the black pyramid of the New Zealand psychedelic noise scene with an erotic jouissance that the reality of the situation cannot support. Or rather, I'm sure it could, but this isn't the record to convince anybody that there seethe new Antipodean dragons of cacophonous intent at the bottom of the world, ready to breathe fire and teach us new languages. It's largely trite, substituting melodrama for true hazard, easy options for imaginal fidelity, narcissistic posturing for the kind of out-and-out abandonment I increasingly feel is a must-have for anyone brave enough, at this late stage of the game, to try assembling anything really radical from the ragbag of old junk spewed into the world twenty-odd years ago with the post-postpunk DIY / cassette / Industrial anti-art deluge. You know what I'm saying: in 2003, there're artists still using the same recipe books, so to speak: lots of hiss, lo-fi or maybe no-fi, mumbly voices, crappy tape edits, drones (of negligible depth, detail or viscosity), wasp-trapped-in-jamjar guitars, jerky drum programming…. It's all so overdone, surely the only way to revivify this particular musical mode would be through passionate commitment to the material as a vehicle for the communication of deep, essential truths. We're flooded with half-assed 'experimentation'- please, no more!

Experimentalism was never supposed to be an end in itself, was it?Of the eighteen tracks herein, I should point out in some sort of mitigation that the majority are simply bland. Mucho loops, mucho beeps, mucho pecking and nibbling noises….yes, yes…all very well….what else you got? Some boring skronk and gibber? Mmm….Dull, limpid piano and/or bass motifs that circle wearily like despondent Negro slaves on some oppressively hot and desolate Southern plantation, barely lifting one foot in front of the other….Then on occasion things turn nasty and somebody starts singing. All three or four of the 'songs' are particularly crap, with a special mention for Wormwood's 'Knives', a risible nursery-rhyme of shameless wankery, and the Strap Ons vulgar garage-rock shouter, 'By Their Garbage They Shall Be Known'- a nice, if possibly over-optimistic epitaph for their career, one hopes.

The best bit's a track called 'Broken Emerald Necklace', by Laudanum.

JONATHAN HELLIER

krkrkrk@hotmail.com
www.go.to/krkrkrk

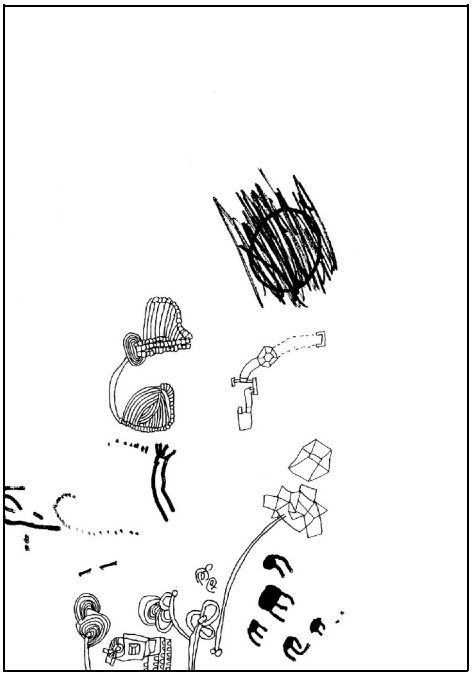
Koji Asano
Absurd Summer
SPAIN SOLSTICE 30 CD (2003)

Koji Asano
Suite for Organ and Recorders No. 1 : "The Alien Power Plant"
SPAIN SOLSTICE 29 CD (2002)

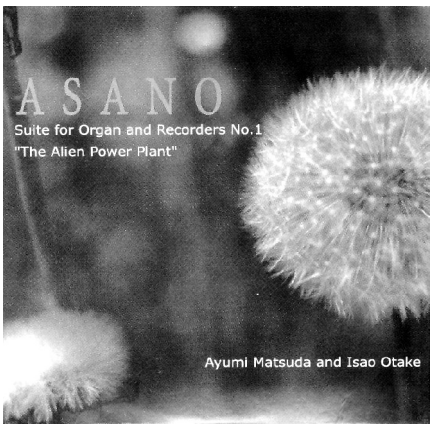
Two very different slices of art pie from the protean intelligence that's calling itself Koji Asano. Still under thirty, and by his own admission he's been into free electroacoustics, rock, solo piano, computers, soundtracks and video art. Phew! Who among his audience has the strength to keep up with this shapeshifting priest of Hermes? Is he, like, particularly well-known? Certainly deserves some sort of attention, I'd say- while not knowing how representative either of these recent releases might be as regards the man's body of work, I'm impressed by the stylistic diversity evident between them. Each represents exploration and mapping of very different areas.

First up, Absurd Summer, which had me rolling the phrase 'ambient metal' across my thought-buds as I climbed its eleven untitled tracks and stood at the peak to survey the view. Abstract in nature, consisting of a series of not-unhumorous lessons in fuzz dynamics and advanced klang, the work exhibits both formal and emotional cohesiveness despite (or perhaps because of?) its mercurial, perpetually-receding not-quite-thereness. Formally, the pieces are akin to a series of magical objects exposed to a parallel series of corrosive fluids- the bones of sound are submerged in coloured stickinesses which distort and/or magnify their innate properties. The vibe is one of committed playfulness- neither flippant nor earnest. Emotionally, well, it's hard to feel exactly moved by the juxtaposition of electric beehive and spoiled piano (track 9) or the prison-wall reverb slapping back blasts of faraway machine anguish (track 3)- to pick some examples at random from the many choices Asano-san has given us- but myself, I'm fine with allowing the work its central metaphor- namely, the detachment and calmness that disdaining to fully materialise can allow us. Anyway, I know I have often felt as fuzzy and trepanated as any of these pieces of music, staggering blindly through my own consciousness, so in its own peculiar way Absurd Summer offers this listener, at least, a warped kind of fidelity to certain speechless inner zones wherein our deaths and resurrections are effected.

Which brings us neatly to the altogether more



ambitious and large-scale work, The Alien Power Plant- Asano's Suite for Organ and Recorders, performed by Ayumi Matsuda (recorders) and Isao Otake (organ). Clocking in at 56'41, it's pretty major- deftly moving among complex flavour-combinations, exploring themes from many angles, offering eloquent commentaries on silence, subjectivity and spacetime, unafraid to rise to the mythopoeic and embrace an epic sweep when sufficient meditative intensity has been attained. It's the densely-packed, multilingual dialogue between (well, what else?) organ and recorder that generates this intensity- for such a seemingly odd duo, they really serve each other well, like a mouse riding an elephant.



What's the most astounding is the sheer variety of shapes the two can make as they clash, mingle, subsume, invade and release each other into and out of the space they share. At no point does the piece start to feel cluttered, or arbitrary in its moves- nor, can it be said, is rigor mortis permitted houseroom- trust me, you will not glaze over as this music drowns you!

I'd say the 37'40 mark is the pivotal point in this slowly-unfurling wheel of brightly-coloured ribbons. Prior to this moment of pure seismic release, things have mostly been on the quiet side. Twittering, wet flute and cautious drones; the barely-audible hovering of flying saucers; water dripping in an underground rockpool; and this punctuated on occasion by bursts of fruity church organ which rouse the recorders to near-frenzied heights of declamatory evangelistic psychosis. At around 20'00 an interesting passage occurs wherein we're the victims of a suddenly aggressive, interrogative recorder which cruelly mocks our gaucheness as the corpulent organ giggles snidely. By 26'00 the combined attack has broken our will and the music opens out into a sparse terrain broken only by the occasional reedy sob, the recorder as schizoid mother seeking to comfort the children she demeaned only moments before. This, I think, is what makes it so effective when at 37'40 massive, hallucinogenic galaxies of organ ripple out of nowhere- great juggernauts of sound smashing into the listener's sushumna chakra. 'Alleluia!' I roared, spilling my tea at this point. Get the picture? Oh, and it just gets better from here as both instruments move in ecstatic tonal unison towards hard-won ambrosiac bliss- yet skilfully and humanely never forgetting to preserve that vital element of furniture-biting madness so intrinsic to their journey. Said madness triumphs at last as The Alien Power Plant grinds to shutdown, the composite organ/recorder entity scampering capriciously among the stars to a final, yelping orgasm at the hands of the Logos.

I'd seriously recommend both of these, is my honest opinion.

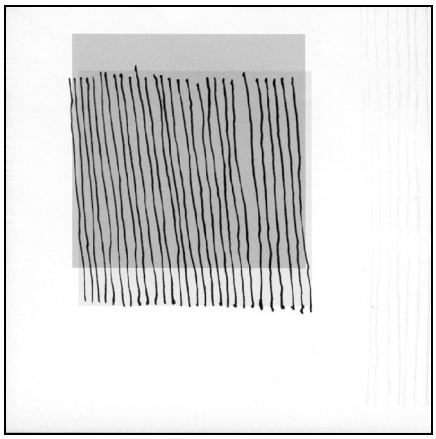
JONATHAN HELLIER

www.kojiasano.com
info@kojiasano.com
www.solstice-europe.com
info@solstice-europe.com

Oren Ambarchi and Martin Ng
Vigil
GERMANY QUECKSILBER 1 CD (2003)

Anthony Pateras and Robin Fox
Coagulate
AUSTRALIA SYNAESTHESIA SYN007 CD (2003)

Something about these two suggested to me they warranted being reviewed together, as a pair. Like matching gnomes, or ornamental bookends, although on the face of it unrelated they seem somehow complementary. Subtler karmas are at work, methinks, than the usual crassly obvious ones that govern the osmosis of musics through the intersubjective webbing of popular taste. These recordings need each other.



Each sheds whiteness upon its twin. Neither wants, very much, to exist. Like two querulous spinsters racing each other to the Holy Grail of fathomless senility, one can discern in their passionately literal devotion to Silence an undertone of exaggerated, lugubrious complaint and poor-me self-justification. This hidden script makes bawdy mockery of the airless façade of their minimalist seriousness. Fact is, most silences are quite profane. Which makes most artists who adopt a lazily theological approach to silent and near-silent textures seem quixotic in their inflated reverence for Very Quiet Noises.

To my ears, that's what we're dealing with here. That's why I prefer to focus on the innately comedic aspects of these recordings, since so doing lends necessary redness to their white piety (which undiluted I find hard to stomach). Ambarchi and Ng, then, for starters, enacting for us a state of catatonic retreat leading to prolonged vegetative coma. Nicely done…a whole human lifespan in miniature really, as we follow the ups and downs of a sine wave in a sort of 'Pilgrim's Progress' for our times. Nude overtones thicken infinitesimally, interweave and unite as an ant moves three millimetres to the north. By 18'00 into track 2, 'When Love Comes Back To Haunt You' sufficient static electricity has accrued for crystalline particles to form, like little talismans and badges of non-being. Here, at this point, we may locate our counter-motif, namely the desperation to cling onto ego-identification and animal manners. How else to account for such a careful and assiduous concealment of persona? No no no, this Zen is cheap and nasty, offering a participation mystique but delivering a cold vision of divine aloofness seemingly driven and reified by the unmet earthneeds of its authors.

Pateras and Fox's Coagulate is better, I guess: this patient has resisted attempts at sedation, and although lobotomised still exhibits violently aggressive tendencies. Lurching, Frankenstein-like around the temples of software that contain it, it howls its protest to an uncaring, wilfully-deaf universe. And again. And again. And again, louder. Still not noticing me? Still won't take care of me and tell me I'm beautiful? Oops, now there's blood and semen, excrement and spinal fluid everywhere as private liquids gush and are spattered blindly in spastic homage to Jackson Pollock. Here, as in Vigil, false silence remains the totem pole around which the work dances its pantomime shamanism, even as it is obscured by a multifarious racket reminiscent of demonic possession: scraping, plucking, gobbling, choking, yelling, screaming and the dragging of horribly mangled objects across post-industrial wastelands into the deep violet glow of Tartarus. Technique as mania. Mania as protest. Nobody's going gentle into that good night around here. Fair enough, if you enjoy this kind of harsh, one-dimensional animism. But for me, its attempts to reach critical mass are dubious, the canvas of its lust too small to portray the immensity of Nothingness it so clearly and cravenly worships.

Must try harder.

JONATHAN HELLIER

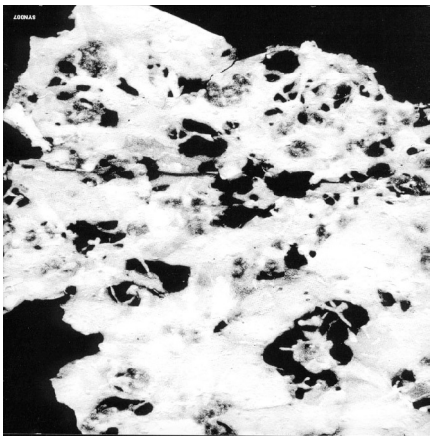
www.quecksilber-music.com
info@quecksilber-music.com
jerkerproductions@yahoo.com
www.synrecords.com

Scott Horscroft

8 Guitars

GERMANY QUECKSILBER 2 CD (2003)

Australian dude uses mixing desk to channel disembodied guitar voices in art-séance whiteout! He's young (24), he's a 'sound-designer', he's working in the tradition of yer minimalists (Messrs Reich & Riley), yet he's offering a 'full-blown raucous electro-catharsis' to 'satisfy….power chord enthusiasts'. Cheeky monkey! As a power-chord enthusiast of sufficient commitment and quasi-religious humourlessness as to make all my friends openly question my sanity, I'd say Master Horscroft isn't too big for a smacked bottom and bed with no supper….You can't go making claims like that



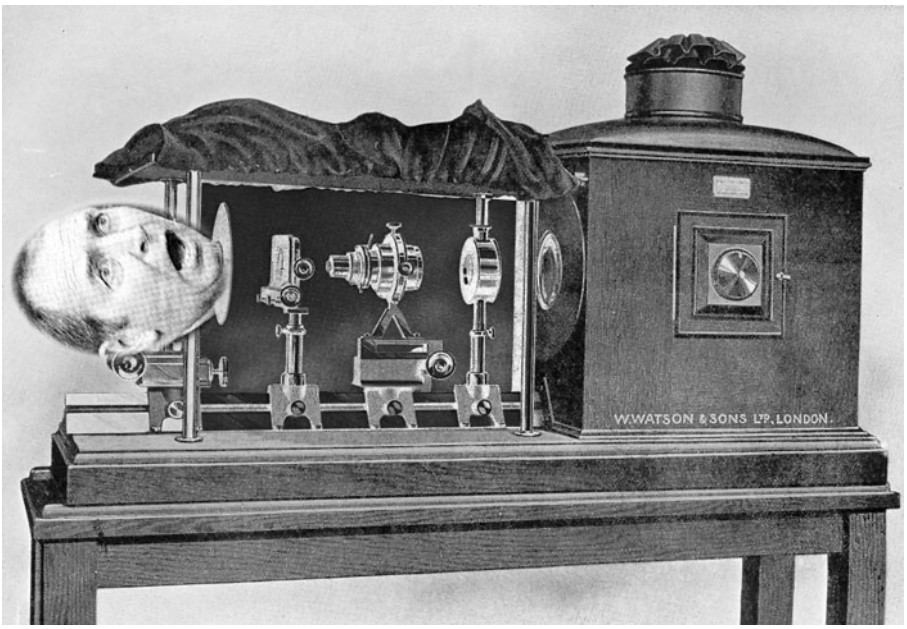
and not delivering. Glenn Branca would've been lynched for less!

No, no real catharsis here, although there is a 38-minute long drone suggestive of prolonged, opiate-numbed, missionary-position coitus. Good or bad thing? You tell me, I'm not here to moralise at you. By the time it finished, I found my thighs were aching and I needed a glass of water. Basic deal is: you can't really make out eight separate guitars, what you get is a kind of guitar ambience which dilutes and coagulates cyclically as the piece endures. Two tracks which run continuously- I couldn't spot the join. Soft and low, then by about eight minutes in a bit more bulk in the mid-frequencies and a scratchy lick. At 13.00 a higher tone emerges, hovering like a heathaze. By this point I was waiting for the electro-catharsis. It didn't arrive. There's a nice moment about five minutes into track 2 when I thought I could discern sub-bass, tabla and theremin among the muted guitar scree: I was hallucinating, of course, but it's a good feature of the recording that it can induce mild trance states; I was at no stage moved to turn it off, instead taking an active pleasure in its percolations, similar to the quiet contentment of watching well-prepared food bubble in a sturdy saucepan. Sounds like fun? Well, yes, up to a point: but when you're starving, you're more inclined to think 'Fuck Delia Smith, I'm having it raw'. My dilemma, in a nutshell.

JONATHAN HELLIER

(Also reviewed in GUITARS section!)

www.quecksilber-music.com
info@quecksilber-music.com



WE ARE CURIOUS (RED WHITE AND BLUE)

A round-up of ALL-AMERICAN LOONBOONS

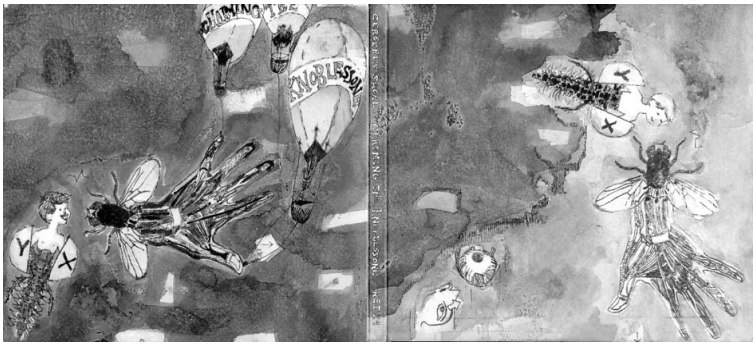
None but the Brave! Never so Few! Some Kinda Nutz!

Cerberus Shoal

Chaiming The Knoblessone

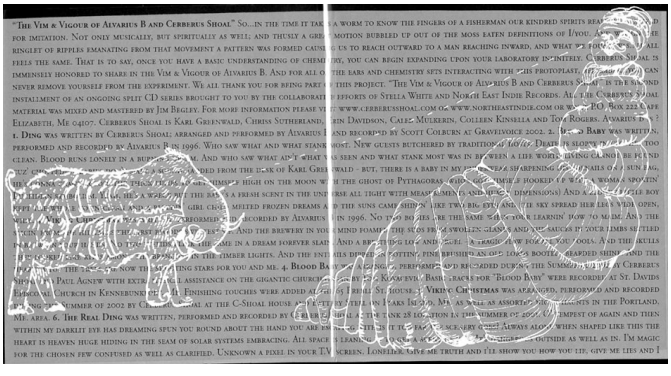
USA NORTH EAST INDIE RECORDS NEI 29 CD (2003)

Cerberus Shoal are a six-piece combo of eccentrics based in Maine, who've been at it for the last three years but only reached my ears in 2003. I mention here their full-length solo CD Chaiming The Knoblessone - an obstinate statement of perverse and crazy experimentalism, an intoxicating and hard-to-digest combination of solemn seriousness with all-out wackiness. I'm still having difficulty coming to terms with its absurdist grandeur. Three split/collaboration CDs also listed below are all charming artefacts in varying degrees. Scott Colburn, the genius-auteur Seattle producer, has elected to engineer and play on Knoblessone. Having interviewed the man (see last ish), I think one of his guiding lights in selecting musicians is trying to relate what he's hearing in their work to something else that he already likes. It's a reference point so that both sides have some common ground, but also a strategy that allows him to follow his instincts to success. I know he's also a major fan of The Residents, which may be why his thinking-ear led his heart to get involved in the Cerberus Shoal universe. Already this bunch of six loons have delineated a private world filled with twisted stories and characters not unlike those which spring from the minds of Duck Stab-era Residents records; and are working towards a definitive sound-scape that totally suits the telling of those stories. Everything in the package - music, stories, words, and images - tells aspects of the same story. They are having tremendous fun, even when sometimes it's hard for the rest of us to make out what's going on.



Chaiming The Knoblessone, over seven substantial tracks, delineates some kind of 'epic' sweep in its ambitions, although what odysseys and stories are being told is far from clear. Musically, they claim to borrow from The Magic Band, Sun Ra and Pere Ubu with their slightly dissonant guitars and choppy beats; but they use other instrumentation, and to me their strongest feature is the use of their singing voices. They can do massed choirs singing, or belting out globbets of ill-fitting word combinations in hearty fashion; they speak and narrate their strange tales with rare conviction; and overlap voices in clever ways, like the overlapping dialogue in Citizen Kane. 'Sole of Foot of Man' uses these massed voices to deliver something apocalyptic, a warning to mankind; it's a gloomy dirge-like hymn, sung Shaker-style, and set in a minor key. Even if the guitar arrangement sounds vaguely familiar, this feeling will soon pass as the playful heart of madness emerges. 'Mrs Shakespeare Torso' conversely obscures its vocal content behind studio treatments and a synth arrangement that fits over it like an iron mesh. Like the lyric sheet, which gives the impression it was written and drawn by outsider artists and retards, it's filled with a confusing array of overlapping information and juxtaposed images that token a highly warped view of the world.

'A Paranoid Home Companion' is a mini-movie, a science-fiction interlude that unfolds an imaginary conversation between two protagonists (a hapless non-conformist and a nameless authority figure suppressing him) over a suitably 'robotic' electronic music backdrop. Every time I hear it, a part of me curls up and dies. But it's the last three tracks where anything resembling normality drops away, and the utter madness begins. I can't begin to fathom out what depths of mental incoherence and remote obscurantism have driven them to these points...'Ouch: Sinti, Roma, Zigeuner; The Names of Gypsy', is a bewildering nonsense of voices crying out with musical pain as though they're being whipped by the percussion section. A lumbering bass riff and wailing slide guitar leads these miserable slaves to their doom. 'Story #12 from the Invisible Mountain Archive' reveals the literary bent of this group, and don't you wish it didn't; a nasty warped tale is drawled out in song-speech narration, against a musical fabric which is like country/western music reinvented by Martians. It leads the mind down alleyways best lest untrodden. The final report from the asylum, 'Scaly Beast vs Toy Piano', has a title that describes its own sound perfectly; not only toy pianos are audible, but a haunting accordion, and screwed-over voices. Although there's a playful wackiness all over this record, there is a lot of twisted melancholy lurking behind the absurdity.



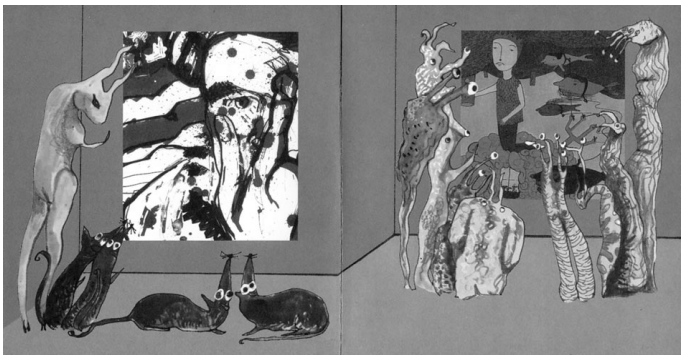
Herman Dune / Cerberus Shoal

The Whys and Hows of Herman Dune and Cerberus Shoal

USA NORTH EAST INDIE RECORDS / STELLA WHITE RECORDS NO NUMBER CD (2002)

To delve further into this zone of dementia, you should investigate the three split CDs which are intended as a series. The Herman Dune one is the first, and the weakest. Herman Dune contribute four songs and 3 'Garajes'; the former are bouncy, slightly wacky ditties played on acoustic guitars and tambourines, and are

quite annoyingly twee. The latter are short inconsequential instrumentals played with harmonica, clarinets and guitars, with TV sitcoms playing in the background. Ceberus Shoal fare slightly better with their songs 'Sweetie' and 'Bouzouki', both such straight-ahead acoustic guitar arrangements with strong harmony vocals that at least one of them could be an out-take from the Fleetwood Mac Rumours LP. They too follow the same pre-ordained structure, of alternating their songs with perplexing instrumental throwaways. Some hidden darknesses lurk behind the pleasant surface, but in all this one fails to gel. Artwork shows coloured etching-like scrawls in the styles of Henry Moore or Pablo Picasso.



Alvarius B / Cerberus Shoal

The Vim and Vigour of Alvarius B and Cerberus Shoal

USA NORTH EAST INDIE RECORDS / STELLA WHITE RECORDS NO NUMBER CD (2002)

The second in the series sees them add their strength to that of Alvarius B. It's a massive improvement and a genuine collaboration, with exchanges of ideas and performances of each other's compositions, the overall sequence of songs tightly structured so that second half of CD answers the first. It's also delightfully macabre, recommended for those who appreciate a taste of the grisly. 'Ding', 'Blood Baby' and 'Viking Christmas' are three songs sung and recorded by Alvarius B in 1996, and they're all grade-A examples of jet-black American folk music laced with killer doses of Grand Guignol imagery, fire and blood. Alvarius B might be one of the Sun City Girls - most likely Alan Bishop. He sings with a sardonic sneer on his face; when backed with minimal foreign sounds and an ethereal backing voice wailing against his spare acoustic guitar, you'll shudder at the results. 'Blood Baby' is a horrifying murder ballad - more like a serial killer story - which follows nightmare logic; and 'Viking Christmas' is a feast of blood, entrails and mutilation imagery, all subjects which Alvarius clearly relishes.

For the second half of the disc, each Alvarius B song is revisited in Cerberus Shoal's radical reinterpretations. 'Blood Baby' is remade as carnival music; piano, vibes and a church organ all create the effect of a Ray Bradbury-styled haunted fairground straight from The October Country. That musical arrangement is strong enough, but the massed voices singing the sick lyrics with lusty abandon will freak you out completely. 'Viking Christmas' is changed into an acapella chant, whose ghastly detail is obscured by recordings of muttering voices and audience chatter from a live gig. 'Ding' is then transformed into a precisely-delivered Joan Baez-styled song with a typewriter tapping in the background. This choice of object clearly reflects their interest in writing, a lot of which is strewn over the sleeve - their collective writing style, a kind of sub-Joycean poetic sprawl, can best be described as 'incontinent'. It's my guess they started out as poets or fiction writers. Artwork for this one features a buffalo and a giant sea-shell juxtaposed in a forced relationship that even James Ensor would blanch at. The sea-shell has a sentient head. This is printed in white on a transparent overlay.

Guapo / Cerberus Shoal

The Ducks and Drakes of Guapo and Cerberus Shoal

USA NORTH EAST INDIE RECORDS / STELLA WHITE RECORDS NO NUMBER CD (2003)

The Guapo split is the third in the series, perhaps the best one and certainly the most ambitious as both bands use the press release to namecheck like crazy, comparing themselves to all manner of influential 'greats' from the past arenas of extreme music, literature and cinema. Their comparisons may help the unprepared listeners to orient themselves, however. You'll need something familiar you can cling to for this nightmare ride. The opening instrumental by Guapo, a quartet recording made in London, is extremely dark; a twisted, troubling and meandering drone-scape depicting mental and physical hells. Cello, percussion, organ, guitars and electronics are all brought into play - brilliantly recorded and built up in distressed layers like so many tonal washes on a watercolour. The organ work is particularly fine, so processed as to sound disembodied like a damned soul writhing in agony. Too much of this will make you feel physically ill. Tasty.

Next comes 'A Man who loved holes' by Cerberus Shoal. This is an elaborate studio construct, built at their behest by studio magician Michael Whittaker, recycling previous acoustic recording sessions made for the Herman Dune CD. The resulting loops and fragments are used as a framework for the Shoalsters to narrate another of their sick stories, yawped out in ghastly growling voices. Chilling and genuinely scary, this is one of their strongest experiments yet, whose cumulative effect is like having your house invaded by hundreds of unwanted ghosts and demons. Exorcism required after listening.

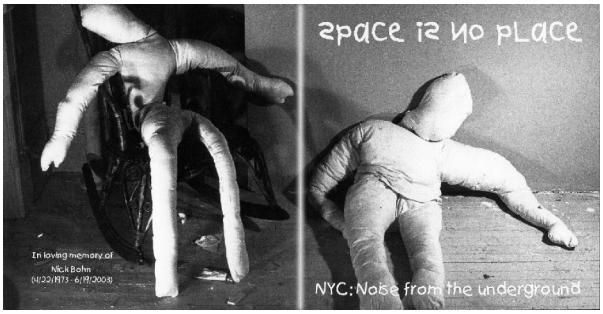
The third track brings both these recordings together, in an integrated refitting of not only the music and the names of the bands, but also their respective track titles. You'll have as much fun solving these word-puzzles as you do listening to the music. The sounds are not simply layered together, so much as pulled apart by butchers and resewn into a hideous living chimera, Frankenstein style. Another macabre and ghostly concatenation results, a scarifying triumph that reveals a certain taste for the grotesque which clearly inhabits the minds of all those concerned in its creation. Artwork for this release shows monsters under the ocean, and giant rats in an art gallery enjoying the image of a blood-stained figure as twisted as any Ralph Steadman archetype.

Intrigued? Then purchase these records soon as you can.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 10315, Portland, ME 04104-0315, USA
neir@maine.rr.com
www.northeastindie.com
www.cerberusshoal.com

Various Hairy Americans



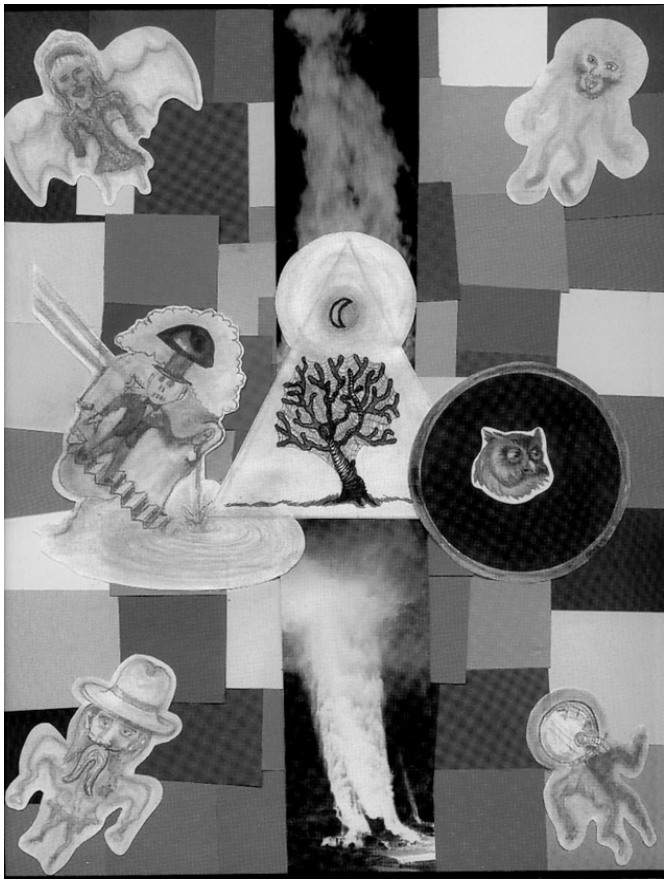
Space is No Place: NYC Noise from the Underground

USA PSYCH-O-PATH RECORDS CDPSP-5 CD (2003)

An essential compilation of contemporary NYC-based noise bands all of which appear to have sprung out of next to nowhere in the last few years. Although a few names of combos and personnel are familiar from reading elsewhere, these sounds are mostly new to your writer and he's impressed. This could well turn out to be an important comp both now and in the future, as more of these bands or players go forward to even greater things; but this release alone, for which they've each contributed a new and exclusive recording, is pretty damn staggering. If we gotta make generalisations, then a lot of these musicians are aiming high, and in related or similar musical areas - obvious reference points include The Magic Band, various Sun Ra Arkestras, the first Amon Düül combo. Naturally enough this music (although wild and hairy) has nothing like the depth or longevity of any of the above. From The Magic Band and Don Vliet, come the dissonant guitars (without the tight compositions) and a vague aura of 'weirdness' that is far removed from the original deliberate freakiness of the Captain's crew. From Sun Ra, come the ideas about free blowing, group playing and charismatic leaders; but most of 'em lack the tight discipline of

any members of the original Arkestras. From Amon Düül they simply borrow that mindless freak-out jamming spirit; still hard to improve on that collective of free-love practising, drug-addled long-haired hippies, or the inane music they made in the studio. But these minor caveats aside, you should enjoy this loud and freaky music as often as you can - it's fucking brilliant!

Leading off are a bunch of collectives who are into extended jamming and acting tribally - like Flaming Fire, whose massed chant 'There is a sky' is propelled by native-American drumming and inexplicable synth breaks; the great way the whole thing repeats itself equates to a modern rain dance, or a magick curse directed against a neighbouring village. Axolotl perform 'Chain of Chance' and sound like a big collective, but in fact are just a trio; a squeeze-box, rattling jewellery and crashing percussion join the mournful horn section for this dirge-like railing against worldly misfortune. The No-Neck Blues Band, who have already come to typify a certain school of open-ended and meandering jamming, contribute a totally spontaneous and dynamic song; the sharp sound of their razor-edge guitars, combined with better drumming and singing, shows they've come a long way since that first Ass Run LP (see below).



Next camp are those wild-eyed fanatics who want to rediscover the lost art of late-70s electropunk, an art form that used to be the pride of New York City. In this vein we have Centuries, a nameless duo whose 'Born that way' is a vile, distorted electropop ditty snarled out by twisted voices, and whose rhythm is hammered out within the framework of gnarled, evil electronics. Terrestrial Tones are another duo whose 'Experimental Farm' is one of the few subdued pieces on a comp otherwise filled with attention-seeking, larger-than-life macho guys; their muted electro-shuffle work is the opposite of most modern Euro-electro laptop trash, and is striving hard to come across as dirty and infected as opposed to clean and sterile. Real music from the trashcans...Mouth Us aren't exclusively electronic, but their strange feedback and loop experiment 'Lost budgie' is a fine plangent noise, bolstered by heavy bass drones and repetitions that make the loops appear like alien chanting. It becomes unbearable in its intensity - not simply loud, but revealing too much about the dark recesses of the psyche. Equally unsettling is the piece from Naturally, a trio of artists whose 'Non Non Nee' is simply nuts - whimpering voices moaning indistinctly from out of a swampy, smoky cloud of threatening rumbles. Another understated cut, its plaintive siren call limns the image of a small white figure calling for help in the streets...it's adorable!The remaining cuts are, for the most part, what you've all been clamouring for since the days of Tokyo Flashbacks - unrestrained guitar noise of one sort or another. Of the guitar-based combos, the best (and perhaps with the best track on the comp) is Enos Slaughter, whose 'Miniature mass, Indian masters' leads off with short-wave radio trickery and becomes a totally freaked-out piece of three-way guitar crosstalk that has within it the best golden moments of US psychedelic music. Marc Orleans, the guitarist from Sunburned Hand of the Man, is one member of this excellent trio (which also has members from No-Neck), and together they open a gateway to outer space! Jesus With Me are a straightforward rock quartet - two guitars, bass and drums - with a soaring sound, high-volume freakouts and a feral intensity to their playing, only slightly let down by the garage-style drumming. But their 'Never Got to China' has a heavy, hymnal quality, as though taken from the songsheet of the church of Deep Purple. Electro Putas are another rock combo, a trio whose playing sounds best when it implodes and collapses (as it does after 60 seconds); for the rest of the time they seem to be a rawer version of MX-80 Sound. Sightings are a blisteringly good noise guitar trio, whose sound again can only be described as feral and is so far ahead of 'grunge' or any other stupid guitar movement that it inspires great hopes for the form! Sightings, beloved of so many drill sergeants in boot camps, really 'sound off like they got a pair'...Mounts of Mata Lama aren't bad either, but a much more conventional rock approach is theirs. A four-piece from Brooklyn, their piece 'Eternity' has a crap title and might be the weak link in the chain, were it not for the screeching wah-wah lead guitar of George Devoe.

And to sweep up the rest of it, there's Breast Fed Yak, a nutty three-piece whose piece combines inane scat-singing gibberish with frenetic sitar-noodling from a player who used to be in Samlas Mammas Manna. We're in a post-Truman's Water world where the only permissible language is infantile talking in tongues. Las Malas Amistades close the comp singing something that sounds like a smoothie Mexican version of disco music, only played on acoustic guitars and with a nasty little organ that's so satanic you can almost taste the brimstone. Very much The early Residents, I must say. In all an extremely strong collection of exciting and urgent music, extremely direct, great evidence of a workable DIY aesthetic that gets good results, nobody with any ideas about 'musical chops' or showing off, and instead a gung-ho approach to just mucking in and doing it. Hairy stuff...and ends up very quirky as a result.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

psychopath@psych-o-path.com
www.psych-o-path.com

Sunburned Hand of the Man

Sunburned Hand of the Man
USA BAD GLUE SBHM 001 VINYL LP (ND)

Sunburned Hand of the Man

The Trickle-Down Theory of Lord Knows What
USA ECLIPSE RECORDS NO NUMBER VINYL LP (2003)

Another large and protean collective combo that has quickly sprung from local fame in Boston to more widespread recognition, partly through word of mouth, a relentless programme of CD-R self-releases, article in The Wire and appearance at a Julian Cope festival in London this year. Cope in particular appears to be genuinely excited about them, possibly convinced that he's found the next Amon Düül I. I saw them live at the Dundee festival in October 2003 (see review elsewhere) and much as I enjoyed it, I regard this band as a catherine wheel spinning swiftly into oblivion - it is my guess that Sunburned Hand of the Man won't last for very long. A combination of personalities that strong can only lead to volatile situations, and it's likely this band will fly apart in no time. The lead guitarist, Marc Orleans, is seriously talented and will be heard from again; their leader, John Moloney, appears to be a charismatic with not much in the way of musical skills, but he has an electrifying presence on stage. Chris Corsano is an excellent and versatile jazz drummer also. The remainder of the band have talents and skills varying from quite good to completely hopeless, the latter category including various hangers-on who simply bang pieces of wood together or blow penny whistles. It all reminds me very much of the child-like enthusiasm I saw when members of The Door and the Window took to a Coventry stage in 1981.

The Bad Glue LP is a bootleg; once the band found out about it, they managed to come to an arrangement with the thieves, seize all known copies, and now continue to sell them to 'cover the damages'. Nothing much is known about the performances, referred to as 'new juice, wafer thin promises, and streetside tales'. The A side kicks off with a 'funky' bass guitar figure - tape must've started sometime after warm-up, already the session is in mid-swing, as we're surrounded by loads of semi-alien noises, a simplistic drum beat and insistent tambourine percussion. A choppy wah-wah guitar knits a scarf in the background. A sax adds crazy wailings, sporadically. It strikes you that no one instrument is 'up front' in this basic

framework, and no 'solos' are evident in the conventional sense - so no one player is the 'star'. This could be one key to Sunburned's artistic success, but it also ensures (in this case at least) that nothing develops very far. There's a clumsiness in the playing which is likeable, but it's also a stumbling block to the music ever taking-off. Next comes a piece built around chanting and trumpet blasts, again delivered over a clanking tribal rhythm. Simple use of echo, whistles and feedback to add some kind of textural depth, and again instruments don't 'play' a completed phrase so much as wander in, mutter vaguely, and wander out again. The vocalist starts out spoiling for a fight - 'War! War!...Good ol' War!' he declares, and by track's end he's degenerated into incoherent wailing. The spontaneity is appealing, sloppy blurtings and gruntings - but where is the hoped-for tribal magic of collectivism? So far, they're not as far-out as they'd like to think. The B-side is the kind of work most likely to leave this band open to the 'young hippies' accusation - it's a long and far-out freak-out sessions, with a stoned voice moaning gibberish, wild drumming and random saxophone blurts, with mildly hallucinogenic sound-effects. Then again, it's all very far from being a 'mellow trip' - there's a streak of nastiness in here somewhere.

The Trickle-Down Theory LP has five tracks recorded 'at the top of a rickety red staircase on June 20 2002' and is decorated in an attractive cover, whose art combines painting with juxtaposed images to build a sort of Outsider-art alchemical-cum-Old Testament bricolage. A tree, a bird, a column of fire, and water all surround a pyramid, with all manner of weird angels and dwarves floating around the centre. What magic musical charms lie within this elaborate wrapper? 'Spell it Out' is a bizarre song of sorts, rendered by a concatenation of massed voices doing different mad things over a lumbering rhythm (which, as I'm discovering, is one this band's trademarks). The main 'theme' of this ode is carried by a distorted chant, while additional voices contribute disconnected moaning, barking, and tuneless free-form singing. There's even some lyrical content going down here (more so than we've had so far), but it's totally obscured by the sloppy delivery, and by the recording technique. Two drummers push the piece along as far as they can - until it stops dead for no apparent reason. 'Show of Hands' is about the best thing I've heard from the combo on these two LPs, since a more concerted effort is made to produce a recognisably different sound, and the playing is far more subtle than the typical 'hammer it out' approach. This piece almost floats along; the percussion work is looser and more intelligent, while the guitar playing is dead on target. More inane gibbering voices ululate wildly, attempting to inject that H P Lovecraft horror of the 'Lurking Fear'. B side of LP is simply further trancey, drum-based workouts, with more low-key instrumentation and lots of echoed wailing. Very little evidence of much 'playing' of instruments, but somehow they reach some sort of groove or other. I often find myself wondering at a point in each track how they got where they are, whether any kind of catharsis has been reached, and mostly whether they got there through some sort of musical achievement, or simply by hanging around for long enough. In other words, when they reach a plateau of tranceiness, did they do something to 'earn' it?

Sunburned Hand of the Man are OK, but nothing that special. I suppose I do like their (almost) all-acoustic approach, the way that reliance on electronic effects kept to an absolute minimum - the synth /organ player (who's very good) is reined in, and echo chamber is used sparingly. The collective 'push' of the music comes from rugged individualism and quantity of acoustic instruments in the arena - strength and weirdness achieved through sheer weight of numbers! The pedantic doggedness of their approach has a downside - disorganisation, the fact that their collective energy is not adequately channelled. This can be a wasteful and inefficient way to make music, and sometimes leads to players trying harder than they need, resulting in a vaguely blocked performance and a hollow listening experience for the audience. On balance, it's hard to see what the fuss is about with this combo, given the low proportion of musical ideas in relation to the large amounts of listening time that they take up.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Six Organs Of Admittance

Compathia

USA HOLY MOUNTAIN 82614 CD (2003)

Looks like this CD is as close as I'll ever get to buying a pop record this year. I suspect Ben Chasny has done better albums than this but Chasny's lovely fluid guitar playing and his distinctive vocals infuse this recording with a warmth and intimacy that may well attract a new set of listeners. The arrangements are spare with discreet effects and the production is clear for an album recorded on a 4-track recorder. Most of the songs have an Eastern / Indian influence or feel, notably 'Somewhere Between' with the sitar-acoustic guitar duet over a drone and the humming that almost goes 'Om', and 'Close to the Sky' which has a steely guitar drone slipping in towards the end. This psychedelic folk atmosphere adds to the CD's charm.

Although the standard of playing is consistently high, none of the songs has very inspired or memorable tunes and the album with its minimal arrangements sure could do with a really hummable melody or two. Part of the problem could be the melancholy or wistfulness that pervades this album to say nothing of the lyrical content which sometimes dwells on death. The only track that really stands out is the relatively cheery clap-along 'Only the Sun Knows' which brings in Comets On Fire man Ethan Miller to engage in some prolonged electric guitar debauchery. There's also a very sweet passage of slide guitar which is the real highlight of this song.

This is the kind of cosy record American college students might curl up with in their bedsits or study rooms after a hard day's worth of lectures and swotting; indeed, Chasny himself dedicates the album to all people who have 'trouble sleeping at night, for whatever reason'. Look at his bleary-eyed expression on the front of the CD sleeve and you know you're dealing with an expert on the subject.

JENNIFER HOR

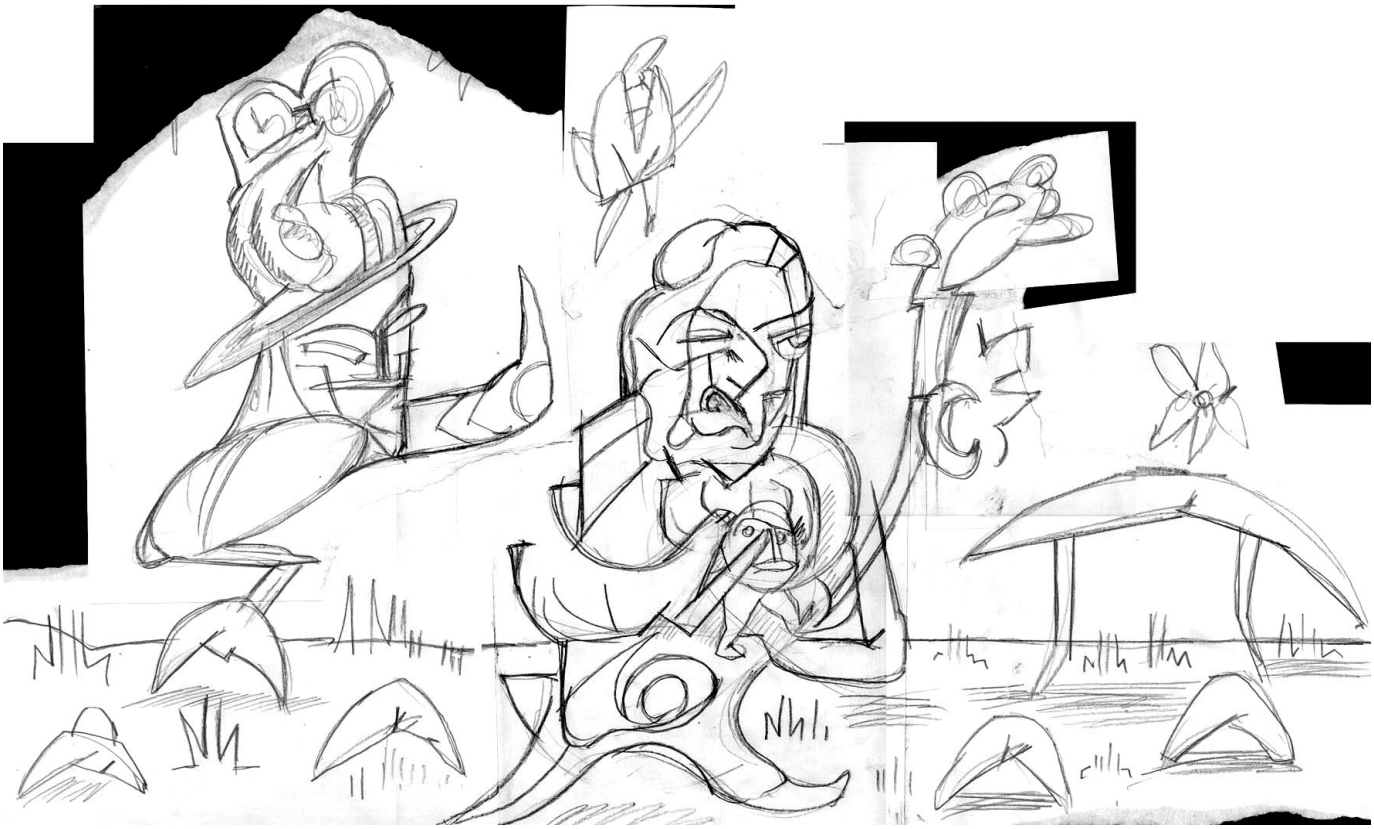
Holy Mountain, PO Box 42051, San Francisco, CA, 94142, USA
www.midheaven.com

No-Neck Blues Band

Intonomancy

USA SOUNDATONE S@1#64 CD (2003)

Well, here's the large scale freewheeling improv and noise combo that divides listeners so much. Some find their brand of collective music too directionless and every release seems as formless as the last (what used to be thought about The Grateful Dead in fact), while others embrace that formlessness as the very essence of the life-river that you want to get lost in, bathe in, and get carried away as it sweeps you away to a golden land of milk and honey. I have here a recent release on the Yod label, as well as an early-ish LP that has the distinction of being the first numbered Ass Run release. The former was sent as a promo but the latter I had to pay a collector's price to get. Seen them onstage too, at the Glasgow music festival called Le Weekend in May 2003, and they are a 'hairy' bunch in all ways imaginable. Not only are their heads and faces quite hairy, but same could be said of their loose-limbed demeanour on stage and lack of proper respect for their musical instruments. Nine tracks here and zero clues, except that it was recorded in NYC in June 2002. Initial impression is of lumbering rhythms and soloing guitars noodling endlessly in free-associative ways; Krautrock comparisons might spring to mind, but the Americans are far less heavy-handed than most of those 1970s Kosmische Germans who



mangled guitars as though they were slaughtering chickens. Here, at least, the chickens are carefully plucked before they get thrown in the pot.

Those expecting wild and crazy free-form 'freaking out' sessions delivered at loud volume in a semi-dangerous environment might have misunderstood what the No-Necks are about. Instead it's a cranky, American obstinate exploration of zones with no real centre of gravity, no tonal centre to the musical sphere which might hold anything together. They don't play particularly loud; there is a gentle almost 'pastoral' feeling to the nine workouts here. The guitar picking on 'Witch', aided by careful percussion layers, is extremely musical and suggests that the No-Necks would have done a far better job of the Tubular Bells project below. 'Witch' is a prime example of the sort of thing they have made their own - circular open-ended riffing, in one mode at a time, letting the linear path develop as it may. 'Play Your Play' allows minimal xylophone percussion to float over uncertain, snakey trails of puttering stuttering beats and some extremely simple contributions from the reeds, guitars and synths. Each painter adds tiny daubs of paint, resulting in an enormous action-painting canvas. Again, this could be seen as the very essence of No-Neck.

The title track 'Intonomancy' is an immediate 'grabber' with its tribal drumming, birdcage percussion, evil tweedling organ and harsh toots from the recorders - like kids playing around in music class. Mind-twisting and subtly disorienting, the magic of No-Neck will be working at fullest extent by this point. Up which garden path are we being led? The road is slippery and hard to get a purchase. Think of a group of writers, each reading aloud one page written in their unique style, simultaneously. Miraculously, a whole chapter of a book results. The wah-wah guitar solo on 'This Absent-Minded Crisis?' recalls Syd Barrett tripping out in an English garden, while the caterwauling voice (no lyrics, just another instrument) is little short of Damo Suzuki changing into a leopard before your eyes. At this point you will feel you are being hypnotised by some evil fakir or snake-charmer.

Their last cut 'The Shepherd takes a shine to the Abyss', finds them at their worst and their best - starting off with seven minutes of completely aimless noodling. The individual sounds are fantastic, but they're completely disorganised. Everyone seems to be on the verge of saying something, but nobody does; the guitar work is just dribbling, drool from the mouth of a babe. A squeeze-box groans out of boredom; a xylophone is tapped aimlessly like someone drumming their fingers. Then, as the drummer joins in and takes everything off down the path, it all coalesces. Like civil war soldiers lifting themselves out of the mud, The No-Neck Blues Band march off to another victory. There's much curious thinking going on here, and a determination by all the players to follow each path to the very end, even if it apparently leads no place. And every man's contribution is valued; a sort of collective rugged individualism. Only in America, I'd suggest, would you find this self-determined approach to democracy.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

221 Pine St #4b1, Florence, MA 01062, USA
websales@yod.com
www.yod.com

No Neck Blues Band

No Neck Blues Band

USA FATHER YOD E#57 / FYPL16/ ACTUEL 1 VINYL LP ND

The Ass Run record states 'Recorded in public and private', lists three locations in New York and jokingly suggests it all happened in 1965, as though No-Neck were a lost ESP-Disk band like a cross between The Fugs and the early Arkestra. This is more to do with Byron Coley's cultural aspirations one suspects. Of interest as it marks a stark contrast to the crisply-recorded and comparatively enjoyable CD described above; this LP is 40 minutes of lovely noisy murk. 'The Ghost of Magnetism' features much amplifier hum, fuzz and some vague clanking and rattling produced by half-baked bashing of instruments unknown. A sluggish and torpid brew of subdued noise, not at all enlivened by the deadening bursts of feedback which come shrieking in. An utterly constipated episode! 'History of Electricity (Version)' is further

feedback experiments, tempered with more clunking and clanking, proceeding at the pace of a drugged snail. Extremely slow and hard to deal with; just great! The other side boasts a long track called 'A gull-scene depth', where the full glories of this incarnation of the No-Necks makes itself known; it's effectively a bad acid trip in sound! The mysterious clanked and scratched guitars are drenched in fuzz and overamped power; everyone starts to scrape in different rhythms, and the awfulness of the bad trip gets worse. Their masturbatory, constipated energy is evident for all to hear, and it's like watching art students who are so determined to express themselves that they wear out the very piece of cartridge paper they're working on by piling on the heavy black marks in conte crayon, 4B pencil and charcoal, until they go right through the page. Already a rarity, this LP shows great courage on behalf of those who released it.

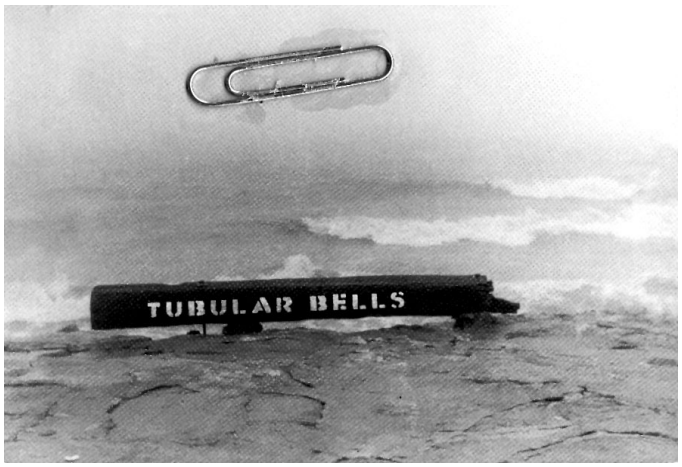
ED PINSENT 11-2003

Comets On Fire

Field Recordings From The Sun

USA BADABING!!! BING 034 CD (2002)

One of those albums that fool you into a sense of tranquillity and security with an intro mixing drones, camel bells and pattering drums before dumping you into a blizzard of heavy metal fuzz guitar, manic percussion and echoing banshee wails within 4 minutes of the first track. (Umm, come to think of it, I don't know any other album that does this, to such devastating effect.) Thereafter, our friends Comets On Fire charge full speed ahead with a melange of primitive garage / hardcore rock, subterranean bass lines deeper than most stoner rock and heavily treated vocals. Ben Chasny of Six Organs of Admittance drops by to play some lovely acoustic guitar for a brief interlude which he and COF follow up with some buzzing guitar distortion before throwing us into 'ESP', a massive display of howling guitars, drum explosions and fuzzed bass. Throughout this CD, COF use echoplex and oscillator to magnify the sonic nuclear assault - the result is overwhelming.



However COF save their best for the epic 'The Black Poodle' - a thick bass rhythm that loops up and down and mucks around with your brain in the best psychedelic tradition, together with frenzied percussion, launch a massive guitar attack on the listener's senses; everyone in the studio at the time this track was being recorded gleefully joins in the mayhem with anything and everything at hand including piano, congas, tuning pegs (they can't have been necessary!), and alto saxophone. Anarchy breaks out about the fifth minute as everyone including all the guest musicians rushes and fights for the lead mike and the original instruction sheet on how to play this track gets lost and people start flying off in different noisy directions. The singing (screaming?) which is never all that clear at the best of times gets lost but when mushroom clouds of hardcore radioactive rock and stoner bass are thundering out of your system's speakers and filling the atmosphere, who's going to bother looking for it?

What impresses most is despite the amazing array of instruments and effects being tortured and the ongoing guitar destruction and debauchery, the basic COF sound (deep bass slabs that would make most stoner rock bands weep, screeching guitar and Utrillo Belcher going utterly bonkers when he sees his drum kit) asserts itself much of the time if not completely in control. The only downer is that after this CD finishes playing, you'll have been blown so far away and so flat you'll be incapable of pressing 'Play' again. Next time, Comets, remember to treat your fans a little more gently if you want people to keep playing your music.

JENNIFER HOR

badabing@aol.com

Glands of External Secretion / Decaer Pinga

Tubular Bells

USA STARLIGHT FURNITURE CO ★19 VINYL LP (2003)

The idea's whack - assorted avant undergroundsters and indie musicians record a 'cover' version of this famous 1973 LP by Mike Oldfield - but have to admit the music ain't so bad. Put aside the slightly sarcastic context (I think it's fairly clear they're having a dig at something here, perhaps the cosy symbiotic relationship between performer and record label, bearing in mind that Mike Oldfield put Virgin Records on the map with this release) and you're in for a good time. Billing it as a 'no-instrument interpretation' is a slight misnomer - the instrument is the recording studio. Like the early recordings of The Residents, what seems to be a limitation is made into a virtue, and our friends here use tapes, editing and dubbing to generate semi-melodic sounds out of anything that isn't actually a musical instrument. As it turns out, they resort mostly to pre-recorded artefacts, but in addition some electronic effects and bric-a-brac. There are some good performers here, most notably Barbara Manning. Together with Bananfish writer Seymour Glass they perform side one as Glands of External Secretion. So totally abstracted are the results of their work it's hard to make any sense out of what they do, let alone attempt to compare it to the original Tubular Bells (which in any case would be sheer folly). Weird and wonky tapes, lots of loops, backwards tapes, all arranged into an extremely dynamic composition which even becomes quite sinister in places. The 'famous' sequence at the end of side one, which originally had Viv Stanshalll acting as a 'master of ceremonies' and reciting the instruments played by Oldfield, is here satirised into a set of totally inert noises being created by - wouldja believe - office stationery. 'Glue stick...stapler...scotch tape', announces Manning in her blithe voice as she grabs whatever objects come to hand. Pretty droll! This drollery extends to handmade LP cover, which has a paperclip and post-it note attached.

Side two is rendered and yielded up by Decaer Pinga, ie the notorious Dylan Nyoukis and Dora Doll. There's even further degradation evident in the 200th generation tapes and extreme processes used; at times we seem to be regressing to 1980s bedroom-cassette hell, where wacky experiments like this one and cheap equipment resulting in abominable sound quality were not only commonplace, but often mandatory. Nonetheless, Pinga's sprawling mass does have a compelling barely-works feel to it, and at times the listener is surprised that such a rickety-construction holds together at all, let alone keeps moving forward. Midway they use samples of bagpipe records and shrill yells, everything exploding in an echo chamber, no doubt sneering at Oldfield's 'guitars sounding like bagpipes'. (It's worrying how much I remember about this awful Mike Oldfield LP!). The Piltdown Man sequence is also achieved imaginatively, with horrid voices barking into an echo unit. With guests Neil Campbell, Matt Hall and Dave Cross, this LP is limited to 300 copies. One doubts if it'll do for Starlight Furniture what the original did for Richard Branson, but it's ain't a half-bad release.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 414762, San Francisco, CA 94142-4762, USA
www.midheaven.com

Sightings

Michigan Haters

USA PSYCHO-PATH RECORDS NO NUMBER CD (2002)

By the standards of us detectives investigating guitar / drums murder cases, this album is run-of-the-mill ordinary. A '70s New York art punk rage (it was all right 30 years ago, I'm not so sure about it today) runs through this recording; there's a lot of testosterone-fuelled aggro here but in the wake of many millions of other US testosterone-powered recordings, it ain't what

I'd call original. Even Pantera when they had Phil Anselmo as vocalist (he sang as though piano wire was slowly strangling him to death) did much better than this. Our friends in Sightings might do well to listen to a few Menstruation Sisters recordings: at least that band, inept though it was, provided a few laughs and could stumble from Whitehouse-styled powwah electronics to space age ambient with a vocal range going from Warner Bros' Tasmanian Devil to castrated Mickey Mouse. More importantly, the Sisters were not afraid to reveal their premenstrual syndrome feminine side and therein lies an answer to Sightings' limited musical / conceptual approach: if you're going to make an angry record, it must be full of righteous anger from deep in the gut and pelvis, starting from small-dot zero and bursting all the way to Krakatau blowing off its top and destroying itself and everything around it in the process. Lay your life on the line, be prepared to go ALL THE WAY AND OVER THE EDGE, risking ridicule and accusations of untrendy and hammy melodrama and you'll have something of grand Shakespearean proportions - think of the dining room scene in Titus Andronicus or the aftermath of the fencing duel in Hamlet where everyone is totally wiped out. Yeeeahhh!!!

JENNIFER HOR

www.psycho-path.com
Another Sightings CD is in the Free 103.9 section.

Sunn0)))

White1

USA SOUTHERN LORD SUNN25 CD (2003)

Apparently Sunn0))) recorded more than enough material for this album which explains its title White1; White2 which I believe will feature a Hungarian vocalist among others, may be out later in 2003 or in 2004. Perhaps for this reason (the split-album, that is), I find White1 not to be a patch on Flight of the Behemoth though to be fair that album was a hard act to follow for any band and White1 does have a certain charm after several spins. True, the music doesn't travel very far but melody, changes in key and other conventional music elements are not important here; in doom metal, atmosphere is always important (which might explain that genre's relative low-key yet steady reputation vis-a-vis other genres of metal - never fashionable, yet always in fashion) and on White1, texture is also an important element - the guitars are rough and the earth-shaking rumbles they make, reminiscent of flashes of lightning and the thunder that follows, are sure to impress as much as the almost-but-not-quite sinister ambience.

Initially, Julian Cope's almost Pythonesque lyrics on 'My Wall' will make some people cringe but Mr Cope is a witty and erudite gentleman whose writing (if these lyrics are any evidence) is far beyond the level seen in many published novels these days let alone the level of popular music and heavy metal; anyway, his spoken voice delivery take up only the first half of the track. Silly though these lyrics are, I am willing to bet that in ten years' time, they won't look half as batty as Robert Plant's lyrics on 'Stairway to Heaven' look thirty years on (I'm one of the few people in the world not impressed by that song; Mr Plant is another). 'The Gates of Ballard' features part of a poem 'Havard Hedde' chanted in Norwegian by Runhild Gammalsaeter who with the members of Sunn0))) and one other person formed the band Thor's Hammer in the mid-1990s for a brief time. (It might not say much about their intended audience's knowledge of Norse mythology that they called the band Thor's Hammer and not Mjolnir.) The music here is a relatively smooth ride with a steady chugging guitar and a programmed rhythm sequence. As for the poem itself, it's about a character Havard Hedde who establishes a farm, marries and has a couple of kids, and grows a tiny forest of two pine trees. (See www.darklyrics.com/storm/nordavind.html#3 for the English translation of the poem and to find out what happens to Havard Hedde and his trees.

And, er, that website does bring back a memory - I used to have Storm's Nordavind CD for a while and 'Havard Hedde' was one of the songs on it - funny, I don't remember the song itself though I remember some of the music which apart from the beautiful female singing was not very outstanding. Storm was a folk metal project briefly formed by members of Darkthrone, The 3rd and the Mortal who supplied the singer Kari Ann Rueslatten and Satyricon in the early 1990s.)

On 'A Shaving of the Horn that Speared You', Sunn0))) throw away the usual heavy metal elements for a formless tone piece with bits of acoustic guitar and vocal and other effects that simulate breathing of someone or something asleep. Everything just manages to hang together with sounds bordering on being unregisterable by the ear though if you listen carefully you realise there's quite a lot of humming and very soft moaning. There could have been a bit less acoustic guitar and the track could have been slower to make for a more menacing track; still, Gammalsaeter does a credible job keeping her vocals low for 15+ minutes. If this is Sunn0)))'s idea of a goodnight lullaby, I am looking forward to their idea of a musical alarm clock or the fire emergency signal.

JENNIFER HOR

www.southernlord.com
Stephen O'Malley: www.ideologic.org

Paul Flaherty

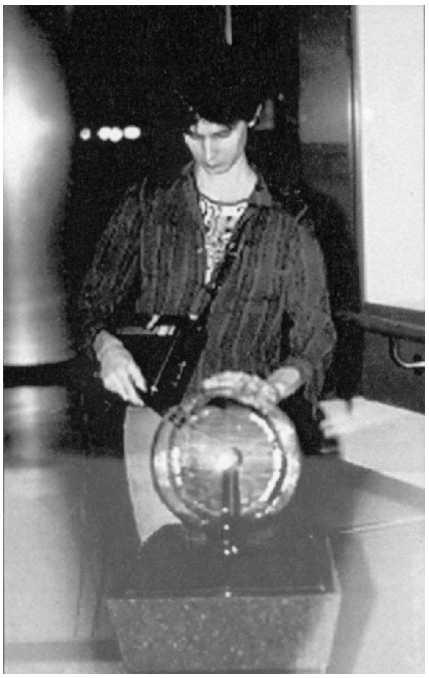
Voices

USA WET PAINT 3002 CD (2003)

Nine tracks of more excellent free jazz blowing from this great contemporary sax-man who's a firm favourite of this magazine. This is all solo (he has made great records with drummer Chris Corsano) played on the alto or tenor sax, and what impresses immediately is how Flaherty can accelerate himself into the 'zone' so quickly. He's like a car going from zero to 600 mph in 3 seconds flat, even without the added propulsion of drums, bass or piano. Imagine what the world would be like if he'd ever played with one of the Cecil Taylor Ensembles. Throaty warbles - screams - overblown screeches and wails - squeaks and hoots - not mere effects but all part of his coherent musical language. All the above is gleaned from the first track alone!

There's much to recommend on this entire CD, but 'Windowed by her eyes' is notable as something like a cross between an Episcopalian hymn, a tribute to the voice of Nina Simone, and a series of Ornette Coleman quotations. 'Little Death' presents a series of cries like a mewling baby, and the anguished sound of that alto sax wrenches deep heartfelt emotions from both player and listener. 'Song for Bobby Sands' is one of the most thought-through 'instant compositions' you could wish for, genuine evidence that jazz is a language and one that's completely coherent in the hands of a master like Flaherty. More than telling a story in music, this track presents an entire argument - and the sentence-structure is all there in the fingering, blowing and tonguing and tremendous dynamic range of subtle effects.

54 year-old Flaherty has been obsessed with jazz since the age of 12, and constantly struggling with the incomprehension of his audience ever since he first tried to get his parents to listen to it on the radio and share his newfound enthusiasm. An experienced player who has released 20 solo records over the last 25 years, he's also performed in hundreds of live concerts and jam sessions in the New York - New England area. In his mini-essay in the sleeve note here, he succeeds in nailing down something genuine about the creative artistic impulse that drives him (and other players of this ilk), especially when he describes his life's work as a 'solo



project by multiple personalities'. In his track titles too he conveys a lot of emotional honesty - 'Our tears are always young' and 'Once you care...you always care' and this work stands as a testament to his evangelical fervour when it comes to standing up for the holy spirit, the wild spirit of free jazz, the healing force of the universe.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 1024, Manchester, CT 06045, USA

Agog

Final myth of the Jesus Underwear

USA CORPUSCULAR DWELLING PUBLICATIONS NO NUMBER CD-R (2003)

The Agog CD-R is a reissue of a 1988 cassette, part of a programme by Bisciglia to reissue his (voluminous) collections of earlier works. Enamoured of his Anomalous LP, I knew Damon was a veteran from the worlds of improv (LAFMS member) and sculpture, but had no idea of the depths of his past achievements. Final Myth is an oddity which may completely infuriate you or delight you - or both in equal amounts, since it's so completely fragmented. Lots of little tracks are stitched together in a messy collage, where everything is apparently conceived as one part of the whole, and pasted together with a rough-hewn aesthetic that makes a virtue out of the untidy edges and noticeable edits. There are nifty keyboards and organ chords played with stumpy efficiency; odd voices muttering dark oaths; captive animalistic groans; tapes played backwards; and much more indeterminate murk piled together. Impossible to figure out the logic of its creator's mind, and this sounds fresh every play. Side one of the original tape features, after some five minutes of rampant chaos, a long see-saw drone piece with random metallic noises on top, as Damian plays odd tunes on home-made instruments. Tinkly percussion, buzz saws and rattling chains suggest that he lives in a creative garage full of clutter, where all reclaimed materials are fair game to be used in his projects. Side Two is even more indefinable, so restless a path does it plot across the discarded artefacts and culture of modern America. You can pick out nuggets like distant piano playing, crackles and pops, radio samples, phrases of noise delivered in stuttering bursts, and perhaps old records being re-assembled, but none of this description comes close to the wild eccentricity of Bisciglia's methods, and the uncanny way that he draws a beating heart of pure poetry out this mosaic-collage of dead pieces of trash. Inspirational.

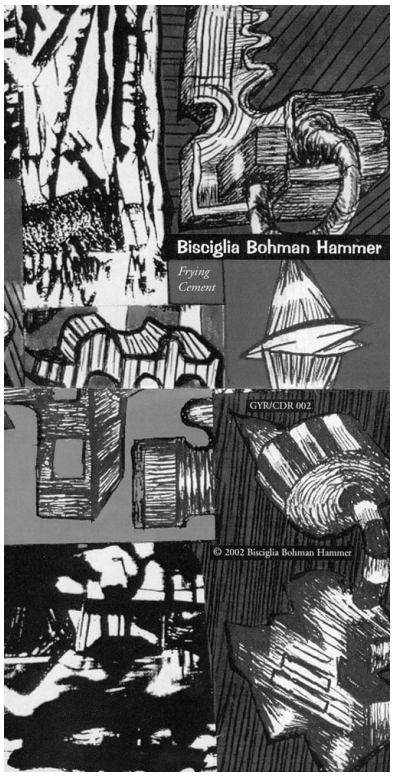
ED PINSENT 11-2003

19241 Kenya St, Northridge, CA 91326 USA
spagyric@earthlink.net

Bisciglia / Bohman / Hammer

Frying Cement

USA SPAGYRIC GYR/CDR 002 CD-R (2002)



Frying Cement is further evidence of the Bisciglia trash aesthetic, here applied in a group improvisation situation. England's finest junk collector musician, Adam Bohman (of the Bohman Brothers and Morphogenesis) joins in to create 9 tracks recorded in 1996. There are home-made instruments, real instruments like zither, violin and cello, scrap metal, brandy glasses, and cheap electronics and tape work from Joseph Hammer (ex Solid Eye and fellow LAFMS member) performed in real time. These are combined to create vast arrays of disconnected and mostly inert noises which do little more than create textures - lovely, non-musical textures, which are akin to taking a mouthful of hot chestnuts still encased in their spiny shells, with coral from the ocean bed, bits of broken glass and buckets of warm glue. The total effect is like wearing a suit of armour filled with wriggling fish, as I do every Candlemas. The great cut-up, absurd titles such as 'Rhythmless Torso', 'Slightly Radioactive Tea' and 'Foot and Mouth Trots around the Globe' do much to contribute to the liberating feeling of this approach to art, as indeed do Bohman's colourful artworks pasted on the covers. Lovely stuff.

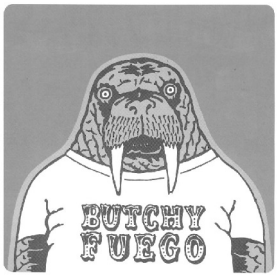
ED PINSENT 11-2003

19241 Kenya St, Northridge, CA 91326 USA
spagyric@earthlink.net

Butchy Fuego

Butchy Fuego

UNITED KINGDOM PICKLED EGG RECORDS EGG 44 CD (2003)



If you managed to listen to Bablicon's eccentric CD (reviewed issue 10) you'll want to check out this oddity, which is a 'star turn' for Mr Butchy Fuego backed by members of Bablicon (a Chicago-based trio) plus other collaborators Matt Schnieder and Peter Andreadis. A good and entertaining avant tour de force which moves through four or five distinct phases as the CD unspools. The early tracks are - like Bablicon manage very well - odd melodies played on woodwinds, piano, sax and other acoustic instruments in ways that (as I've said before) will appeal to Henry Cow and Slapp Happy fans. Then we get songs like 'The Paleontologist' where singer turns in a convincing Red Krayola impression, with distant muttered vocals and lyrics written in absurdist style. Soon after this, we start wandering through the murk of studio-effects purgatory - 'Filler' and 'Bumbleplight' in particular are beautiful and bewildering self-indulgent studio-based experiments, drenched with echo, electronics, reverb, cut-ups and loose disconnected voices. Great electro gloop for the masses. Near end of CD, 'Bunny' is a long strange song which anyone should be proud of, affecting that kind of retarded 'outsider' music feel you get from early stoners like Dinosaur Jr or Sebadoh, or perhaps anyone who ever tried to ape Daniel Johnston. In all a strong melodic approach here and laced with more appealing idiosyncrasies than you find in contemporary English music, which is saying something. Another nifty item from this UK independent label.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 6944, Leicester LE2 0WL, UK
info@pickled-egg.co.uk
www.pickled-egg.co.uk

Greg Kelley

Q What is music?
A Anything you use in the same way that you use music.

Greg Kelley was born in Boston in 1973 and began playing the trumpet 10 years later. His musical studies took him to Baltimore for 4 years during which time his tastes for marginal musics led him towards free improvisation and noise and away from conductors and symphony orchestras. Certain dreams faded and in 1995 Greg moved back to the Boston area to find new ones. He has since embarked upon what the Gnostics would call a 'long, immense and rational disordering of all senses' seeking outlets for various dimensions of his music. This disordering has taken him across the United States, around the world, and into situations various and sundry. The following situation took place in late 2003, on computer consoles in both Olde and New England...

EP If I've got this right, there's many strands to your musical endeavours - playing free jazz with Flaherty and Corsano; abstract computer-assisted music and sounds with Jason Lescalleet; duo improvisation in nmperign; and solo work, such as *Let Me Feel The Lack*. Anything I left out? Can you describe each area of your work for our readers? Can you account for how you got to these points? Which one gives you most satisfaction, artistically? Does it trouble you to be such a 'musical schizo'?

GK Musical schizophrenia doesn't bother me at all. There was a time when I was concerned that I wasn't 'focused', then I realized I AM focused; focused on shattering into a thousand pieces. Each endeavor serves its own purpose, each has its own qualities of satisfaction. As for how to account for them, basically: I play music, I meet people, we play music together. I'm not comfortable in one place, one scene, doing one thing. I like expanding my horizons. In addition to solo work, nmperign, work with Jason Lescalleet, work with Paul Flaherty and Chris Corsano, there's Heathen Shame, a trio with Wayne Rogers and Kate Biggar, guitar behemoths who run the Twisted Village label and record store, and have a long history of feedback saturated, psychedelic rock and roll. In that group, I'm amplified and go through some effects. Then there's Blomit, a duo with my girlfriend, Sandra, who sings in the band LA Drugs (also coincidentally part of the Twisted Village empire). Blomit is a noise group, based on contact mics in the mouth, feedback and voices. Another non-trumpet group is the Great Danes, which is me and Howard Stelzer who runs the Intransitive label. I play analog synthesizer in this band, which is also a noise band, and Howard plays a more brutal version of his usual tape recorders and electronics setup. We both wear dog masks in this one. In addition to these, there's a coterie of improv groupings including the undr quartet (a low volume chamber group with Vic Rawlings on cello and electronics, James Coleman on theremin and Liz Tonne on voice), the BSC (an 8 piece group including all of the undr quartet, Howard Stelzer again, bassist Mike Bullock, my nmperign partner Bhob Rainey [the BSC is a group he organized and runs] and Chris Cooper, a great guitar mangler who also does work under the name Angst Hase Pfeffer Nase, plays in the bands Fat Worm of Error and Barn Owl.), plus intermittent meetings with some of aforementioned, percussionist Sean Meehan, and others. And much as it seems like a lot, not all of these groups meet frequently, so I do have some spare time (for more groups, no doubt?)

EP Your solo record *Lack* is pretty amazing...any electronic treatments to the trumpet sound, or tape edits, to achieve the total effect there? Or

was it all done live in the studio? Could you reproduce that sound on stage? Are you determined to reinvent the sound of the trumpet? Even Axel Dörner is tipping his stetson to you as you ride by! What about the lengthy title for that profound solo statement? Are you some kind of a failed writer / poet?

GK I'm surely a failed poet, but I actually stole that title from Terrence Mallick's movie *The Thin Red Line*. When I saw the movie, that particular line struck me and I knew I'd use it at a later date. All the sounds on that CD are from the trumpet without any processing with three exceptions: 1) the drone section at the end is slowed down and the left and right channel are out of sync by about 1 second. For this I used a computer. 2) for one sound, I recorded something onto cassette, then fast forwarded the cassette and recorded that for a quick blip. 3) for another sound, I simply had a small microphone in my mouth and breathed. Other than that, everything is closed miked, some parts are deliberately recorded too loud to distort the minidisc, and I used the minidisc to 'sort of' edit: with the record function on pause I would start playing a sound, unpause the minidisc, then pause it again for not-quite-real-time musique concrète editing. Then in one spot (there's a constant tone and a second tone that comes in and out) I used some cheap overdubbing by recording onto cassette, then playing back the and playing along with it. So, w/ a microphone and a PA, I could almost reproduce it live, except for the ending, but I wanted to make a recording that was a recording and do things I couldn't do live. I have another solo recording coming out soon on BOXmedia called 'I Don't Want to Live Forever' which does this even moreso. As for reinventing the trumpet, that's not a goal for me, but I'm extremely interested in sound and I want to make some I like. Beyond that, how a sound is used is more important to me. I'd like to make good music that transcends the novelty of 'making funny sounds'.

EP So, what's the New England jazz - free music 'scene' that we hear so much about? Who is in the charmed circle? How'd you get into it? Who are the key players, and where do you fit on the totem pole? Is it just free jazz...or so much more?

GK I'm not sure... what are you hearing about? There's a myriad of scenes and players here and they all have their own totem poles and key players. I guess the best way to get into the charmed circle is to move to New England! For me, the key players are the people I play with who are listed above, but that's by no means an exhaustive account of the region. Nonetheless, there are a lot of circles, charmed and uncharmed floating around and the totem pole looks like a junkpile!

EP Well, how about the Eremite label...and the Fire in the Valley festival?

GK The Eremite label and the fire in the valley festival are based in Western Massachusetts (about 1 1/2 or 2 hours from Boston) and run by Michael Ehlers. Most of the musicians that Michael works with are from the New York city area (or Europe), so while he's provided opportunities to see people like William Parker, Jemeel Moondoc, Joe Mcphee, Peter Kowald, Peter Brötzmann, etc. there aren't too many New England musicians involved. Some exceptions are bassist John Voigt and drummer Laurence Cook, who are from Boston, whom I've played with quite a bit especially in the earlier days. But in general, I'd say it's more a forum for hearing music in New England than a participatory part of the scene here.

EP How do you think you have developed and evolved your musical craft to get where you are now? If indeed you feel you have gotten anyplace, that is. Did you start out on a jazz route,

do you have your 'chops'? Can you read sheet music, play scales? Is such a grounding necessary to play free music? Are you purely interested in sound for its own sake?

GK I've always had an interest in more than one gutter. I went to school for classical music thinking I'd play chamber music of the ancient and modern variety, have a rock band on the side and pretty much do whatever I fancy. But the stifling atmosphere of the conservatory and the excitement of non-academic avant-garde soon got me thinking otherwise. The vast possibilities out there got me headed where I am now, which I DO feel is someplace. I've been able to play music with a fantastic amount of people, travel the world, have recordings released, get interviewed by INTERNATIONAL periodicals (nudge, nudge), so I must be somewhere. For me, it's a pretty good place. Anyway... from that training I have retained the ability to read music, maintained some 'chops', etc. And I think that training, discipline and familiarity (with 'music' or the trumpet) is definitely important and often integral to what I'm doing now. And it's certainly responsible for me getting into the various and sundry musical situations that I'm involved in and responsible for what I can put into and get out of them; whether that means reading actual music with Braxton or at my sister's wedding, having the stamina to keep up with Paul Flaherty or Kate Biggar, or knowing when to end a piece with the Great Danes or Blomit.

EP What, in your eyes, is hot and exciting in the improv scene in the USA and Europe? Rossbin and Erstwhile are putting out some of the best CDs right now - care to argue with that? What about the Japanese scene - have you ever met or played with any of those quiet, minimalistic ultra-restrained players that dog our lives so much?

GK Hot and exciting... well, like the endeavors I'm involved in, the things that inspire me come from far and afield. I'm excited about the Shadow Ring and Graham Lambkin, the Wolf Eyes/American Tapes/Hanson Records axis, the historical minefield of the Alga Marghen label, and things that are coming out of the cracks. Specifically in terms of the international improv scene, I don't feel that any one label has a monopoly, especially since many players often put recordings out on many different labels, so I'm more interested in the players themselves. So... who's hot and exciting?! Sean Meehan is an amazing musician in New York who plays just a snare drum and coaxes a bunch of sounds out of it with sticks, rosin, and forks. Jeff Allport and Tim Olive from Canada via Japan are fantastic. Jeff plays very subtle amplified percussion, while Tim plays an almost homely tabletop guitar and they make beautiful, quiet, very organic and somehow very funny music that I think stands outside of any scene or school. Chris Cooper's erratic floortop guitar and electronics are always a treat. I also enjoy what Gunter Muller and Oren Ambrachi are doing. Kevin Drumm has moved outside of what you might call simply improvised music, but I'm a big fan of his work. Off the top of my head, these people come to mind. It may seem clique-ish because they are all friends, but I am truly excited by the music these people make.
As for the Japanese scene, I have met some of these onkyo-ists, but I haven't played with any of them. I've enjoyed Otomo Yoshihide's work for quite some time, especially since he's someone who's covered a lot of ground from excruciatingly loud noise, rock, jazz, 'onkyo', etc. I'm very happy that I'll meet him for the first time in a little over a week where he'll be performing with the BSC, a group that I'm in. I'm really looking forward to this! Otherwise, I've been really enjoying Ami Yoshida's work, especially here recent solo CD 'Tiger Thrush'.

EP What is the best thing about being Greg Kelley right now?

GK That I'm part of everything I'm part of.

EP Do you practice / play your horn every day? How do you prepare for a concert? What make and vintage is your instrument? Where did you get it? Have you modified it or customised it in any way?

GK I play a fairly standard Vincent Bach Bb trumpet which I bought brand new at a brass outlet about 15 years ago, right before I started high school. I play it as is. I try to practice/play every day just to keep the muscles in shape so I don't tear my lips open like Freddie Hubbard or my conservatory professor did. If I miss a few days, I definitely notice it. It's like running without

stretching or keeping in shape. It hurts.

EP What's your approach to engaging with computers in making music? Is it just another tool to be used like any other? A lot of laptop music is pretty dire - care to disagree?

GK I do think computers are just another tool. It certainly makes sense as an editing tool. As musical instruments, they can be great or the can be boring and sterile. There seem to be strong proponents of both trajectories. But they are relatively new, so there's a lot of work that can be done. I've noticed a lot of people performing with laptops are adding other things (guitars, synths, tapes, etc) to flesh it out a bit and this is nice. Chris Cooper once told me that he saw Carlos Giffoni play and he really enjoyed it because Carlos made expensive equipment sound like cheap crap. I recently met Carlos and mentioned this to him and he said, 'That's great! I just started using a laptop and I'm making it sound like real shit!' So... there's hope!

EP Do listeners every say that they find your music difficult to listen to, boring, or insufferable? What do you say to these misguided souls - or do you ignore them? What do you think about your own music? Do you have any idea who is your audience, and what they might be getting from your music?

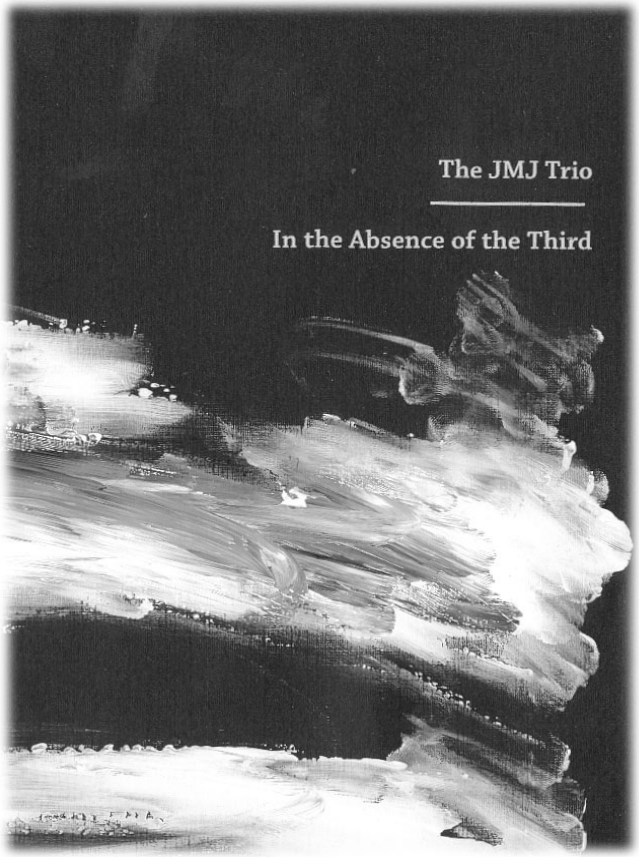
GK People have certainly told me this and I've told them that that's OK. They may be right. If it's not for them, it's not for them. I generally like my own music (gasp!). Of course, there are things that are released that I may not think of as 'shining moments', but sometimes it's not my decision and maybe it's not necessary to only have 'shining moments' and besides, my ideas about what those are are sure to change over time. But generally, I try make music that I want to hear. As for listening to my own music, I scrutinize it endlessly until it comes out, listen to it in its final form to make sure it's correct, then I move on. Sometimes I'll check back to see how something worked out and sometimes I'm very pleased and sometimes I think it could have been better. But there's too much scrutiny involved to simply enjoy it. As for my audience, there are probably some people who like one or two things or groups that I'm involved in and don't know or care about the other stuff I'm doing and there are probably others who know about most of it and hopefully like most of it. But a lot of times, I can't possibly know who they are or what they're getting out of it, so it's definitely nice when I actually get to talk to people who like what i do, either via email or in person. Which is why I always try to have my email address inside my CDs, a website that's easy to find, etc. Communication (on one level or another) is definitely a large part of why I'm doing all this, otherwise I wouldn't feel the need to release recordings, tour, etc. The social aspect is a big part of it.

EP What can avant free music do for the people of the world? Can it change things for the better, by winning the hearts and minds of listeners? Is it really The Healing Force of the Universe?

GK It's there for people who want it. I think music can change the way a person thinks about the world around them which I definitely feel it's done for me. It's a way for people to communicate with each other. It can be a coping mechanism, escapism, entertainment, something to talk about, something to ridicule. Whatever you want it for. My favorite definition of music is from a book *Roulette* in New York put out about getting around in independent/experimental music and it had a glossary in the beginning which defined music as 'anything you use in the same way that you use music.' So.... there it is. □

Guitar musics

WE HAVE BEEN BOTHERED BY THE PRESENCE OF INTERMEDIARIES



The JMJ Trio

In the Absence of the Third

USA ONTOLOGICAL RECORDS 001 VINYL LP (2002)

From NYC comes this rather lovely and quite unique LP. From the moment I opened the parcel I kinda figured I'd be in for a treat - it's a limited vinyl artefact (fewer then 300 copies) presented in a blue master bag made of art paper, on which daubs of white and red gouache have been smeared by the artists ('Those were fun to make!'). Mini-dose of abstract expressionism suggesting the clouds outside the windows, or horizon lines, or surface of Manhattan Bay. Inside sleeve is equally arty insert, grainy and blurry photographs of city locations screenprinted on blue paper. The two members of this musical 'trio' are Tim Elder and Michael Machemer, who combine their extremely laid-back guitar improvisations with field recordings made in NYC. They performed at three locales - the Library, Oyster Bay and 'the Annex' - taping their guitar work with hand-held cassettes, and then taking additional sounds from the environment and performance spaces. Hence, a lot of 'open' space really leaks in to all of these six cuts; you can almost see the bare floorboards of a huge loft space (even though they never recorded in such a place) or gain the feel of sunlight beaming through huge, grimy windows which give onto the streetscape below. Each piece is very much wedded to, and in sympathy with, the urban environment that birthed it, and indeed the artists go to some lengths to persuade us that the 'living space...[is] a crucial part in the creation of these sound events', so that the sounds of doors slamming, steam radiators crackling or answering machines suddenly going off are all part of the experience. It ain't all Cagean randomness, though. Clearly, given that several hours of recordings resulted from their activities, there's been considerable effort made in selecting the best and most successful moments for this release, which have been tweaked slightly by judicious post-production.

The guitars make languid, drifting sounds that will appeal to all lovers of the 'longform' droning effect - changes in timbre are effected, rather than changes in pitch. Sounds shift around like dirty rainclouds, or crisp autumn clouds, outside an unwashed window. The guitars resonate, producing a very full sound, yet it's also very light. As players, the musicians subscribe to something called the 'Nordoff-Robbins School of Musical Therapy', which seems to posit beliefs based on the healing powers of good music and develops a healthy inclusiveness to its church, allowing the possibility of anyone to express their 'innate creativity' through music. Tim reports: 'Mike took a music therapy class in college with Noah Nordoff as the professor; it sounded pretty wild. They had a ton of acoustic instruments and they would improvise during class. I don't think they ever actually played with patients, it was more about learning how to use music therapy to help people with serious psychiatric or cognitive disorders. It's a fairly fascinating field with hardly enough of the funding it could need...Mike learned guitar as we started the JMJ and I feel the class helped validate feelings of musical worthiness and so on.' This is the first release by the trio, and indeed the first ever issue on their new label Ontological. We look forward to more materials in like manner from them both.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

853 St Nicholas Avenue, No 402, New York, NY 10031, USA
ontologicalrecs@hotmail.com
Copies available for $10 ppd. in the US and $15 to UK and the continent.

Burkhard Stangl / Dieb13

Eh

USA ERSTWHILE RECORDS 025 CD (2002)

A highly intriguing release - to say the very least - Burkhard Stangl reports for duty here, joined by an electronics player and recorded in a studio in Vienna in 2001, and BS is quickly establishing reputation as some kind of guitar player, but of what ilk nobody can really say. He's building on the work he put into prior ensemble releases like Home and Wrapped Islands and improving his craft all the time. I think he exhibits a fascinating, understated and positively oblique approach to playing his instrument. Perplexing puzzles for the mind and the ears result; like, where the devil is he? If you ever heard a record by Les Paul, Charlie Christian or Django Reinhardt, at least you knew (or you thought you knew) where the guitar player was situated in relation to his chosen instrument. Stangl is busy redefining that given relationship. The guitar's somewhere on this planet, but its player is 500 miles away, out there in orbit in a spaceship. On this CD at least, there abound several negative spaces where playing of some kind could be expected, but instead you get...what? The conventional laws of physics completely disrupted. Must investigate further.

Stangl broods like a brown-skinned ape-necked platypus, for long stretches of time. He creates extremely abstract fleshapod Lovecraftian music and exhibits, in flashes, a brittle genius of some sort. It might reside in a glass jar on the shelf, like some pickled specimen. Meanwhile Dieb13, whoever or whatever he may be, acts like a foil to the main man, adding his random outbursts of computer and electronics and turntable stuff, sometimes playing the jester to Stangl's King Lear. He spews out abrupt interjections, ill-fitting bursts of power leakage that disrupt the mood, and ruin everything. Perhaps he's more like the raging storms (blow winds and crack your cheeks) that provide the poetic fallacy to Lear's demented rantings. In particular I would urge you to skip direct to track 7, should you be fortunate enough to purchase this CD or be given it for a birthday present; you will be rewarded

with a piledriver of a piece, loud and dense guitar scraping mayhem with a subliminal screaming alongside it; how did these maniacs achieve it? A charging rhino with a gigantic screeching bird carried on its back would be less alarming. In short - a deliciously strange and bewildering avant guitar record, which will oblige you to shrug shoulders and repeat its title 'Eh' many times in incomprehension. It is not purely noise, nor purely electronics, nor purely guitar music, but an exciting and strange blend of all three. Output equals a fourth dimension, new and exciting. Though Stangl has tended to misfire slightly in the past, here he shines.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.erstwhilerecords.com

Shifts

Vertonen

NORWAY HUMBUG
HUMBUG 015 CD (2003)

This CD is but one of many musical sidelines pursued by the seemingly impossibly productive Frans de Waard, a man whose level of output makes many national economies appear sluggish. De Waard is apparently motivated by all things minimal, citing Steve Reich and Alvin Lucifer (and also George Martin's work with The Beatles?!) as overriding influences. Shifts is his exploration of all things six-stringed (a dark and dangerous world ridden with confusion and self-doubt), describing it himself as 'minimal, overtone induced music, played mainly on guitar and treated in the studio'. De Waard releases his music under a variety of differing monikers, solo and in collaboration with others, all this when he is not slaving away at his day job in the musty vaults of Staalplaat.

The first thing that hits you about this CD is that the noises encapsulated within sound like no guitar you have ever heard before in your life. Instead you are presented with the sound of glaciers inching their way inexorably down mountain fjords, the slow thawing of a frozen lake, of the heavenly spheres themselves moving their way through the dark void (if sound could travel in a void) of space. This may give you some idea of what I'm talking about. Many are the pretenders that claim to alter their sorry axes beyond all human recognition only to be found wanting. Not so de Waard, who makes no such claim for himself, and yet he delivers where others fail. The tracks presented here have no other apparent label than 'Vertonen', 1 to 7 (for seven tracks there be). The material here was originally recorded by de Waard in 1995, and scheduled for release on Freedom From (?) in 2002. That apparently never happened and now he's had it remastered and released on the small Norwegian Humbug label.

We start out by hearing a gentle pulsing and glitches before becoming aware of some giant metal sculpture swaying in a distant breeze. On the next track raindrops fall through the roof of an abandoned factory: the aftermath of a terrible storm. Again a strange pulsing sound is a feature that becomes apparent early on. A large clock begins to strike the hour, but what time could it possibly be in a timeless world such as this? Track three finds us in a vast underground machine room of the near-future, various mechanical devices grinding away, only to evaporate softly before our ears.

As things progress we move through ever more ominous landscapes, many of which have a variant on the pulsing theme mentioned earlier operating somewhere within them. Elements are if anything paired back gradually until we arrive at track five which consists of an electronic drone, more than a little reminiscent of a freight train horn stuck in the on position. Continuing this new theme, an alarm bell rings out on track six to alert us to some imminent danger. Slowly joining this is first a metallic beating followed by a high frequency wash. As the first alarm submerges beneath the waves another rises to take its place. It is left until the last track before there occurs anything like a recognisable guitar sound, and then it's hardly obvious. A strange chiming starts up before being joined by some speaker-alternating phasing and high clinking.

This CD is rigorously minimal in a really old school kind of way. It neither goes very far nor does a whole lot on the way there, and yet it blows the socks of many things to pass by these ears recently. In its studious going-nowhereness it manages to somehow, like the best minimal music, invoke whole worlds of meaning within its droning soundscapes. De Waard has been knocking around for the best part of the last twenty years releasing marginal music under various guises and it's obviously age and hard experience that enable him to produce work of the quality presented here. It is a shame therefore that he seems to operate largely in a world of self-releases and producing work on small labels. It would be nice to see someone bigger pick him up instead of the latest laptop wunderkind, though I'm not too sure if he would be entirely pleased by the prospect.

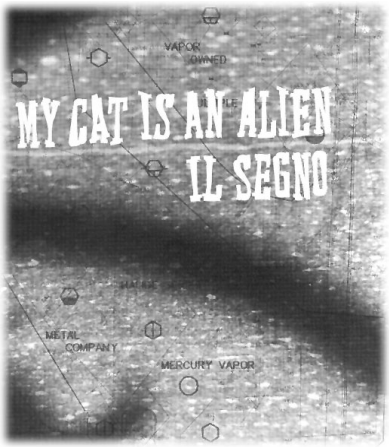
AARON ROBERTSON

Anders Gjerde, Bomloveien 20, N-4029, Stavanger, Norway
tchartan@online.no
www.beequeen.nl

My Cat Is An Alien

Il Segno

USA STARLIGHT
FURNITURE CO ★20
VINYL LP (2003)



A fairly staggering new LP from the Opalio Brothers Maurizio and Roberto, the Italian guitar and noise duo who have become worryingly prolific already - almost as many releases notched up in their catalogue as NY guitarist Loren Mazza Cane Connors, and each one about as turgid! Besides the excessive double LP reviewed last issue, I've since picked up two of their limited-edition 'art' pressings, which is to say CD-Rs wrapped in handmade envelopes of artwork, on their own Opax label. Those are pretty unbearable for the most part, but admittedly do generate some moments of useful scuzzed-up noise. The Cosmological Eye Trilogy part one is a good one, although the treble CD set Out of The Blue, Into The White is definitely one to avoid - it has one CD of passable guitar screech, while the remainder is two hours' worth of completely pointless amplifier hum with the sound of rainfall in the background! Now I come to think of it, that sounds pretty good...must play it again soon.

There's the trouble with these goons, who only 8 years ago when lousy bands like Hovercraft were on the lips of everyone in London, would have been labelled with the same dumb tag of 'spacerock' (which is to say not very good impersonations of 70s prog or krautrock) - they produce something so brilliantly simple and dumb that it borders on unlistenable, yet retains a compelling charm. This LP's first side is dominated by the reading of a poem, 'The Sign' - a bleak poem of alienation, nothingness, futility and despair, which is snarled by Roberto in broken, halting phrases, sounding for all the world like Alan Vega on skag. As he wanders through a desolate cityscape, the poet finds manifestations of his misery in everything he sees - street signs, broken windows, malfunctioning lights. It's a downer - a real paean to disconnectedness. Behind this recital is a joyless, endless drone of guitar sound, a whirling sensation of electric guitar strings strummed by a machine-like robot hand. The drummer, Viggiu Vortex, remains under-employed at this stage (although he lets rips later), occasionally tapping a cymbal or pushing a bass drum pedal in desultory, uncertain manner. Easy listening? Nope, it's really tough going...but as dystopic sound-visions of the future (and the present) go, it's pretty much unsurpassed. In any case, I'm sure you all need an antidote to the 'happy, shiny, success' culture which is being constantly rammed down our throats, so this LP is clearly a good choice in that regard.

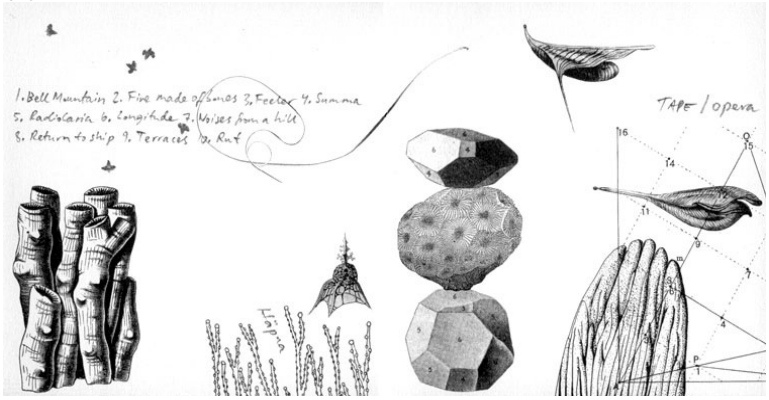
Steeping their every statement in metaphors of 'aliens from outer space', the work of the Opalio guys reflects their own spiritual desolation, a personal sense of exile and a state of mind heavy with the reek of existential despair. Far from psychedelic in outlook, their music is pure heroin music - wretched, strung-out, endlessly painful and emaciated. Good stuff! We're still on side one...upon poem's completion, the trio start to 'freak out' in the most cold, clumsy and apathetic way imaginable, leading the listener off into an outer-space voyage across a universe that is a meaningless and empty void, where the stars never shine. Even Pink Floyd at their grimmest never

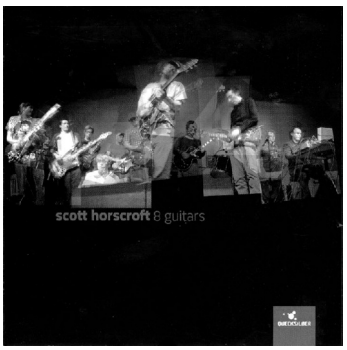
managed anything like this! MCIAA start to get pretty rowdy, yet no more melodic...the guitars remain (like the Grim Reaper's scythe) strangulated, chiming, instruments of death.

Side two continues this odyssey in like manner, all continuous playing, and a chaotic jumble of clanking, halting guitar work, barely propelled by leaden, lethargic drumming, starts to accumulate. No let-up from the pallor of gloom seems apparent, although an insistent monotone - most likely one guitarist hitting the same note repeatedly - does feature heavily, along with light feedback, droning guitars and chiming guitars, and a toy piano making rattling and plunking sounds while attacked in frenzied, spastic fashion. A remorselessly abstract workout, kind of 'cosmic' in imagery, but their overall project which seems to find aliens everywhere (not just aliens masquerading as cats) is for the most part earthbound, and very claustrophobic.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

www.midheaven.com
www.mycatisanalien.com





Scott Horscroft

8 Guitarists

GERMANY QUECKSILBER 2 CD (2003)

A finely constructed tapestry of restrained and delicate guitar-generated sounds and rhythms fed to and manipulated on a computer by Sydney-based Scott Horscroft. This 30-minute long piece split into 2 'tracks' was recorded live with eight guitarists each of whom observed strict and unchanging rhythms over the piece's entire length. The recording suggests a long and interesting train journey through an unfamiliar but perhaps mostly rural landscape under a vast blue sky. The appeal of this recording and its atmosphere - very hypnotic - comes from the interaction of the guitars and their particular tonal and harmonic characteristics. As you might expect from an army of axe grinders, the musicians produce quite an array of tones and rhythms which are constantly shifting and very un-guitarish, though half-way through 'Track 2' we start to hear a familiar guitar buzz while the underlying rhythm changes. The notion of a journey is reinforced by the way the piece builds up continuously and, in the last 2 minutes, gradually achieves a soft landing. Connoisseurs of abstract guitar-based electronica, consider boarding the Scott Horscroft Express and taking a ride through this sonic wonderland.

Australian TSP readers will have been fortunate enough to have seen a film clip of the live performance on a series produced for SBS television by Oren Ambarchi, one of the guitarists involved - the CD sleeve photo is the first time Ambarchi has actually appeared on the cover of any CD (that is, if you don't count the pictures on his old band Phlegm's first album where in one photo his head is superimposed on Gene Simmons's head I think so he looks like a member of Kiss [he wished!], and then in another photo his head is superimposed on, ahem, a nude body). This series focussed on experimental / fringe music around the world, screening in June / July 2003. Overseas readers will have to pray hard to their deity of choice that the SBS television execs will see the light and export this fine show - if the execs are worried about overseas reactions, they can always cut out the feature on the Austrian band Fuckhead.

JENNIFER HOR

www.quecksilber-music.com
info@quecksilber-music.com

Tape

Opera

SWEDEN HAPNA H.9 CD (2002)

A pleasant enough set, combining guitars and electronica - and a small chamber orchestra of other acoustic instruments - from this trio of Swedes, Andreas Berthling, Johan Berthling and Tomas Hallonsten. Andreas Berthling has admittedly improved slightly since his Mengerzelle and Grünberger release in 2000, which was derivative laptop garbage of the worst order. Opera shades into territory already mapped out by Polwechsel, although already Stangl and company are doing their best to disguise the fact that they use guitars at all. Tape, however, positively celebrate the sounds of their guitars, with crisp recording techniques that show off every nuance of their chords, slow plucking techniques, harmonic strums, and like that. If only they were doing a bit more actual playing...the notes and chords are short, simple and basic, even at times a bit throwaway, like a half-baked sentence you don't quite finish. What's more they're structured within the kind of simplistic two-chord arrangement which any student guitarist sitting in a bedsit could do in their sleep. In Opera's favour, there is a wistful and melancholic feel to each of its instrumentals, and the accompanying electronic makes hoover-noises, fizzing and skipping effects to provide gentle rhythms, and are generally amiable as travelling companions. The other instrumentation - including harmonicas, piano, flute, bells, glockenspiels, accordion, trumpets and more - is likewise unobtrusive and does not detract from the pleasantness of the sojourn. The harmonium is particularly nice. But if you want more than 'nice' from your music, look elsewhere. Intriguing sleeve art though, combining geometric grids with images of nature - trees, rocks, crystals, birds and leaves. This may refer to their low-key use of field recordings in Opera, or the combination of acoustic with electric, or something.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

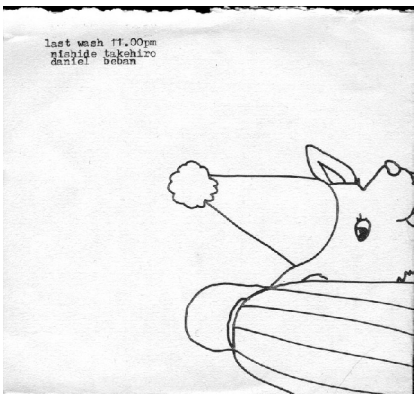
Hagagatan 46, S-113 47 Stockholm, Sweden
info@hapna.com
www.hapna.com

Nishihide Takehiro / Daniel Beban

Last Wash 11.00 pm

UNITED KINGDOM MY GIANT MUM RECORDING MGM-001 CD-R (2003)

Three tracks of minimal guitar scraping and feedback japery, recorded in London by Nishide Takehiro and New Zealander Daniel Beban. Takehiro is associated with the TwoThousandAnd label, made a release as one half of Noise Flamenco (see issue 11), has performed at Offsite in Japan and published an MP3 with the great title A Man Of Zero. Daniel Beban currently does the Unknown Country programme on Resonance 104.4 FM, with Martin Williams. On this recording, evidence of very effective interplay, if you want to call it that; each workout starts off very faint, small sounds, lots of edgy silence and growing tension, but they wind up loud, big and obtrusive. Think of the smallest flea leaping onto your awaiting hand, then growing into a burly harpooner about 8 foot tall. How would you deal with the situation? The musicians wrangle and wrestle with their instruments as though the guitars were sick animals, tearing a full range of dynamic whines and simple two-note melodies from the throats of their equipment, making the feedback literally sing complex tunes - and they do it all in real time. Extremely well disciplined stuff, and mark my words - this pair will be up there with the 'Onkyo' giants in no time. First release on the My Giant Mum label, and judging by the imaginative but inexpensive production, a real no-budget release.



ED PINSENT 11-2003

mygiantmum@hotmail.com

Tim Catlin

Slow Twitch

AUSTRALIA DR JIM'S RECORDS DRJIM034 CD (2003)

Outstanding drone work from this Melbourne-based guitarist and sound artist, who also doubles as a part-time fish. Not just another solo guitar CD to hit the already overburdened bandwagon of such recordings, Tim Catlin's Slow Twitch is a very beautiful album full of rich quivering and organic sounds obtained with the use of low-tech mechanical devices (and no computer processing!) by the artist to keep his guitar strings constantly vibrating. He's a tabletop guitarist, playing it with his own hand-made effects and devices, alongside live loops; so on these four long works, the extended guitar noises are mixed with a motorised drone that resembles the roar of a helicopter passing overhead. Ringing, chiming and scraping effects make you think of a more benign version of Organum, but far more measured and without any of the 'dark' undertones you sense from David Jackman and company. For over 45 minutes, you can almost believe that Catlin has actually brought an inert object to life without resorting to techniques the Vatican disapproves of. The soundscapes on this album range from industrial workshop full of pulsating rhythmic noises to celestial drones that at times give way to rough buffeting clouds, to mysterious haze drifting from a far horizon; the worlds created breathe steadily and develop at their own pace.

For the most part this CD is very slow-moving, richly layered with harmonic resonators...each piece proceeds with a sense of real purpose, and generates all manner of gradual shifts as it moves along. The more you listen, the more deep layers are revealed among the intensely throbbing fields of sound. The heart-rate for these four works seems just right somehow, aligned to the pulse rate of the average human and very much in synch with our nervous and circulatory systems. This may explain why music can produce this healing sensation occasionally. Slow Twitch is a good envelope for your carcass, a body-cast filled with a cooling balm. The title track appears to describe an ecosystem that evolves according to its own logic and criteria; unfortunately the piece isn't quite as good as the rest of the album as some of the sounds are not that distinctive to the CD and are too full-on and boring - the track could have done with some light delicate or even fragile touches here and there. It puts one in mind of a pleasing piece of process art, perhaps something that uses lots of bright acrylic colours. And going by the titles such as 'Electric Clouds' and 'Vapour Trail', Catlin is a kind of 'look up at the sky' painter, rather than a simple landscape painter (of which there are probably quite a few remaining in Australia). Catlin can indeed come across as quite a sensual sound artist, and though he may not quite make it into La Monte Young territory with these droning experiments, he has played with Phill Niblock, the famous New York minimalist. Catlin also plays with Australian improvisers such as David Brown and Andrew Barrie, and occasionally in a guitar duo with Mike Cooper in the UK.Overall, Slow Twitch is a very lovely listening experience, quite robust and not at all static.

JENNIFER HOR / ED PINSENT

www.drjimsrecords.com.au

Various Artists

E.A.D.B.G.E

USA 12K 12K1025 CD (2003)

A fairly enjoyable guitar compilation featuring four international stars of the fretboard. All the featured players seem to inhabit very similar sound-worlds, and if taken in one sitting the entire CD can appear to be a single extended piece in 14 movements. 'Contemporary sonic hybrids of guitar and digital processing' is how this is sold to us. Certainly, all musicians treat the sound of the guitar quite extensively, in some cases almost to point of unrecognisability - half of this could be mistaken for average electronica. Their apparent love of rich, tonal chords can also start to grate on the nerves - it veers from being moving, to cloyingly sweet. Indeed, final verdict is that this is something of a 'sissy' record, and should be set aside if you like your guitars gritty and loud!

Fonica are a Japanese duo, Keiichi Sugiomoto and Cheason. They come across like a subdued, cartoon-version of Robert Fripp, with their skilfully-played cascades of notes, extremely 'nice' major chords, all formed into dronning, shimmering pieces that resemble rotating crystal balls. Come to think of it, stern-lipped overlord Fripp was never this approachable, not even if you count 'Book Of Saturday'! American player Keith Fullerton Whitman has made solo guitar records for Kranky, Locust, Tonschact and others; what little I've heard from him is like 'Lettera' here, a nine-minute opus which is almost a mini-symphony in its shifting complexity. While moving slowly, it has more twists and turns than a jade labyrinth and some of his unpredictable changes are pleasingly bewildering. Again, a 'full' and resonant sound emerges, a coppery ocean large enough to bathe in.

Sébastien Roux's three pieces are similarly moving, rich, quiet, slow and...very 'nice'. Not far away from the world of Ian Epps (I played both in the same sitting), and Frenchman Roux also uses the 'stutter' effect to add a certain patina to his sound. Heaven knows what scary equipment these guitarists must use. He's more of a composer, processing very simple guitar drones in a digital way. Roux works at IRCAM in Paris, where he's in charge of 'room effect synthesis tools' - great way to earn a living. Christopher Willits, based in San Francisco, pretty much owns the second half of the CD; has to be said he's about the most saccharine of the four players, and it remains to be seen how often I'll be revisiting his section. He leads off with seven miniatures which he calls 'Seven Machines for Summer' - and delivers twee, sweet dainty melodies that are, effectively...guitar embroidery. Yes, the man is a big girl's blouse! In his pursuit of excellence in guitar craft and melody, he's straying close to 70s popular prog (Renaissance, that sort of area) which gives cause for concern. His final track 'Champagne and Soda', however, gives hope; much more abstract and scrapey it be, though not much to put on a postcard to the folks back home.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

info@12k.com
www.12k.com

Peter Stampfel interview

PETER STAMPFEL, VETERAN AMERICAN singer, turned in a solo acoustic set on the tiny stage at London's 12-Bar Club in Denmark Street on 12 August 2003. Armed with an acoustic guitar and mandolin he performed folk songs, traditional songs and popular songs drawn from his vast repertoire, and also self-penned songs from, some from his lengthy career, but others more recently scribed that reflect the vastness, geography, politics, history or mysteries of America - inspired by road trips, former friends and lovers, strange events. Just as American folk songs about the sinking of the Titanic emerged during the early part of the last century, so Stampfel has contributed to the canon of '9-11' inspired songs with his own 'We're Still Here' - a song not lacking in irony, as evident from his deliberately world-weary delivery. Then there are crowd-pleasers like the sparky 'Dook of Da Beatniks', a lovable tribute to the pre-hippie underground where the singer claims 'I don't wear a beret, coz I ain't a cliche' and where the chorus, in one variant, quotes from 'Duke of Earl'. Just one example of Stampfel's frightening knowledge of the history of popular song. Among the tiny audience at this London gig were some drunken lame-brains in the front row who weren't exactly heckling him, but whose interjections were far from helpful. Fortunately, a man of Stampfel's experience remains totally unflappable. Days before this, he was guest on the local Resonance radio show Diggers hosted by Sharon Gal and Edwin Pouncey, where by all accounts he charmed the birds right out the trees in Regents Park.

Stampfel's increased profile over here is due to the efforts of Brendan Foreman, who also organised the European tour for The Du-Tels (Stampfel with guitarist Gary Lucas) in 2001 - of which the London appearance was a treat and a half for this writer. Foreman edits Blue Navigator, a magazine devoted to offbeat American songsters of this ilk, and has been organising similar tours for Michael Hurley for some years. Hurley's appearance in London - the first ever - reduced grown men who were lifelong fans to tears. It's worth picking up the fifth issue of Blue Navigator, as it's devoted to Stampfel and includes articles compiled from other sources such as a 1970s Holy Modal Rounders interview conducted by Nick Tosches, an Ira Kaplan 'gimmick' interview wherein Stampfel discourses liberally on arbitrary categories of popular songs, and an exhaustive discography with sparkling appreciative notes written by Byron Coley on top of his form. My interview below can only scratch the surface of a man of Stampfel's depth and personality and it leaves out enormous chunks from the story (nary a word about The Fugs for example), but unfortunately it was conducted in some haste and twice interrupted. I noted later that Stampfel repeats here (sometimes word-for-word) his Steve Weber stories which have appeared already on the internet, but that probably just shows he's getting tired of answering the same stupid questions from upstarts like myself. I wish I'd asked him about Mississippi John Hurt, who is without doubt my all-time favourite blues musician ever, and whom Stampfel is reported to have once met during the early 1960s. This was at a time when America was rediscovering its blues heritage and found, to the amazement of all, that Hurt was still alive and was tracked down living in the same town which he named on one his 1920s recordings. As for bluesmen, I was pleased to discover over an Indian meal that Stampfel shares my view about so-called Blues legend Robert Johnson - ie that he was an over-rated flash in the pan and a very derivative late-comer copyist, and a show-off too. Not a patch on real originals like Charley Patton and Skip James.

Stampfel is probably most widely known (even among people who never bought a Holy Modal Rounders record) for his version of 'If you want to be a bird', which appears in the Easy Rider movie and on the soundtrack LP - and delivered in a voice that tends to divide listeners. Stampfel himself seems a bit embarrassed by this particular albatross today, perhaps in much the same way that cartoonist Robert Crumb wishes he could live down such canards as 'Keep on Truckin', Fritz the Cat and the Big Brother LP cover, and contributed notes to the recent CD reissue of the Moray Eels LP where he feels compelled to 'explain at length why it was that way'. In the chronology of records mentioned below, we start with the first two Prestige records The Holy Modal Rounders and The Holy Modal Rounders 2 which were issued in 1964 and 1965, after which the duo of Stampfel and Steve Weber broke up. We miss out the three Fugs LPs with which Stampfel is associated. Then we skip to 1967's Indian War Whoop, recorded for the ESP label where the duo reform and with an appearance by Sam Shepard, who also appears on the Elektra record The Moray Eels eat The Holy Modal Rounders from 1968. Neither record in original vinyl form has any bands - ie they play continuously on each side - still a thing which irks Stampfel to this day. We then run out of time and aren't able to even mention the 1970s records, such as Good Taste is Timeless, Alleged in their Own Time, Have Moicy and Last Round. But we bring things up to the present with the Du-Tels who have a CD on Shimmy-Disc, and Stampfel's latest exciting project Century of Music. Now read on.

Time: 12 August 2003

Place: The 12-Bar club, Denmark Street, London

PS = Peter Stampfel

EP = Ed Pinsent

EP Where does the appeal of a song lie for you? Is it in the words, the meaning of the words and the content of the words? Or is it the musical form that you're interested in?

PS Well, why do you like certain songs, and not others? I like songs that get me off when I'm singing them! And get me off when I'm hearing them. My current project is recording the 20th century. 100 years - 100 songs! 1901 to 2000, one song per year. It's a project. I got 52 down so far. Basic tracks

[recorded], in some cases, a few are just me and an instrument. Most are me and a guitar, a couple of instruments, a couple of guitars, and harmonies and stuff like that. But they're gonna be - eventually they'll all be fleshed out. And I'm picking songs that I like, that represent their year in a particularly excellent way, that I can pull off, that I can actually do without embarrassing myself; besides the element of self-pleasure in being able to pull 'em off as well. I mean if I could get out of doing it, it would be embarrassing or hokey or a lot of fun doing it, but people found by the result would be 'not good'. So ideally, I get off, people get off, and eventually when the whole thing is done people will be much more included towards the extent of 20th century American music, other than there are a couple of British songs too, like - 1965 is 'Concrete and Clay' - a great song, and 1967 has gotta be 'Waterloo Sunset', the song of the year! One of the songs of the century. I'm not doing any Beatles songs or any Rolling Stones songs. I mean, there's only about four Beatles songs that I don't like, and most of the rest I adore. I love The Stones in the 1960s - I'm not as wild about them after Brian Jones went. And by the time we get to *Exile On Main Street* there's a couple songs I like on it, but for the most part I think the songs are just not as...I mean look at *Between the buttons*, and look at 'Dandelion', look at 'Child of the Moon', look at 'The Lantern'. Any one of those songs is worth more than the totality of what they've done since *Goat's Head Soup*.

EP Is this Century of Songs project going to come out? Have you got somebody lined up to release it?

PS There's a company interested. The plan is to have a US, UK, European and Japanese release. Hopefully. Four CDs...each CD will have its own quarter-century on which the songs will not be chronological. In other words, the first disc will be 1901 to 1925 exclusively, in other words it won't have any songs from 1926 on, but the order will be programmed for ideal [effect].

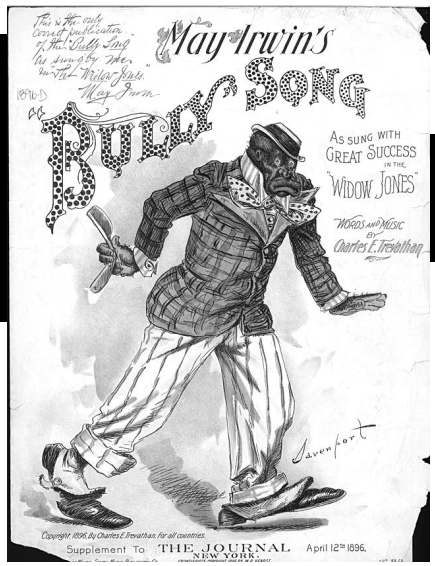
The first song from 1901 is 'I Love You Truly' - great song, one thing I like about it besides its sweetness, it sounds very much a 19th century song. Good way to start the century with the side. I thought it was an 1880s song, I had no idea it was a 1901 song. But an awfully bad choice for the first song. You know, you wanna start with a [bang], start with three or four bang-up songs before you, you know.

EP How did you meet Gary Lucas?

PS We were invited to play for a benefit for [radio station] WFMU. They moved from New Jersey, I think they're now in Jersey City. But they were semi-affiliated with the college for a long time, and then they became totally independent. And we were playing for a benefit there, and I never heard of Gary, and he was playing with Jeff Buckley. And I was seriously devastated by Gary's guitar playing! *Good Lord, that's...!* The combination of folk-esque playing of an acoustical instrument, but amplified and...I didn't realise for years that he actually uses his bare hand. No picks, not even fingernails. He cuts all his nails down, and it's pure callouses on the strings. His guitar playing is scary! Then we suddenly started running into each other, we both went to the same gym and we ran into each other there, and I said 'I really like your playing an awful lot!' Just coincidentally, he's been a fan [of mine] since the 60s, and he just worked on a couple of old Holy Modal Rounders songs, so we both felt we should ask each other. Then we started doing some gigs. That was about 1993. Gary of course has his own solo career going, and he plays with vast mobs of people of every possible stripe! I am one of the many stripes! And I'd been playing with a bunch of other people as well. That's how I met

Gary.

EP I could ask you loads of questions about the songs you played just on that night alone. I was really impressed by your version of 'Out on the Rolling Sea' by Joseph Spence. It was very interesting all the inventions Gary Lucas was coming up with, variations on the tune.



PS Yes, Gary is one of the few people who can play the Spence guitar piece and do his style better. I mean, Spence's playing is not the most complicated in the world, but it's absolutely uncopyable. The thing about finger-picking, yet heavy syncopation. Virtually no-one who fingerpicks has ever seemed to be able to do it to the degree that Spence did. Gary can, and my old partner Steve Weber, back in the old days, had more syncopation with his finger-picking as well. But they're about the two people who could do it besides Spence, but neither one of them to the degree that - neither left the sufficient spaces to make the syncopation pop, like Spence did. Leaving those perfect spaces.

EP 'Golden Slippers' was another song on the list. You discerned an obscure symbolism in the lyrics, trying to figure it out.

PS Very weird song. I forget the author of that song. [James Bland] He was a black guy, one of the few black 19th century songwriters that actually was able to have his presence known. He also wrote 'Carry me back to Old Virginee', that's his other big hit. The line that gets me in 'Golden slippers' is 'Your age must be just sweet sixteen.' The idea that when you go to Heaven, then suddenly one's corporal/angelic presence is in the format of a teenager! I don't know whether that's some kind of obscure Christian doctrine, or whether there's biblical precedent for that idea or not. I should actually ask some serious Christian types about that. But it's such a poignant concept. It's the idea that most people...the song was written in 1881 or 1882, and life expectancy was about 48 or 58 at the time. And people...your average 25 year-old from the period probably lived to be about 40 by today's standards. And people's bodies were pretty dinged up! And the idea that in Heaven one is suddenly transformed into the bloom of youth, your body is perfect. You're grown up, but you're not old enough to have - what's the word they use for when furniture has dings and stuff - there's an antiques word...distressed!

EP Another one I like in your set list is 'The Bully of The Town', fascinating song - sung by May Irwin.

PS It was a written song, I don't know who wrote it. But the weird thing about that is I was told that the concept of the bully of the town actually went right back to the early 19th century, when the flat-boat guys, the keel-boat...my thing is that these guys are to flatboats, what Paul Bunyan is to lumberjacks, what Pecos Bill was to cowboys. The idea being that your flatboat guys were pretty big, pretty tough guys. It was pretty much the serious macho gig in the pre-cowboy days! So naturally the flatboat guys would be pretty big and tough. The story that I heard was when the flatboat guys would come to a town, they'd all go down to the tavern or whatever, wherever the boys got together, and they were looking for the biggest, toughest guy - the bully of the town. The bully of the town was the guy in town who could beat everyone else in town up! And his insignia, his badge of office was actually a yellow feather. So the bully of the town, the toughest guy in town, had a big yellow feather in his cap! So the big-tough flatboat guy would look for the bully of the town to see who was wearing the yellow feather best of all! A friend of mine who's pretty knowledgeable told me the story, and I would like to get some back-up for that story, because it just sounds just a little bit too [fantastic]...but then again it has that ring of truth. It's just too bizarre to be made up.

EP There's a lot of people now re-discovering American folk music. Ever since the reissue of the Harry Smith box set, for example.

PS It keeps on threatening to [explode]...Dave Van Ronk, back in the late 50s or early 60s, called it 'the great folk scare'. He meant that it seemed like something was actually going to happen, but it actually never really did. The folk scare was sunk by, on one hand, when the English invasion hit, of course folk music sort of continued its presence in the form of 'folk-rock' unquote. Even to this day, a lot of punk rock groups, after they'd been around for a little while, many of them had gone into alternative country music, or quasi-traditional,

which is a more modern sort of folk-rock for the 70s and 80s, so to speak. Like Cordelia's Dad is one example of dozens to hundreds. And the *O Brother* film of course gave a lot of that stuff a higher profile. But a lot of people were debating whether it would actually mean anything in terms of a permanent awareness of that sort of stuff. On one hand, The Dixie Chicks are doing more acoustic-ish stuff, and a number of country people are sort of going in that direction more often. Dolly Parton went acoustic a couple of years ago. That would have been her bluegrass record [*Little Sparrow*].

EP Johnny Cash made those American Recordings that were acoustic as well.

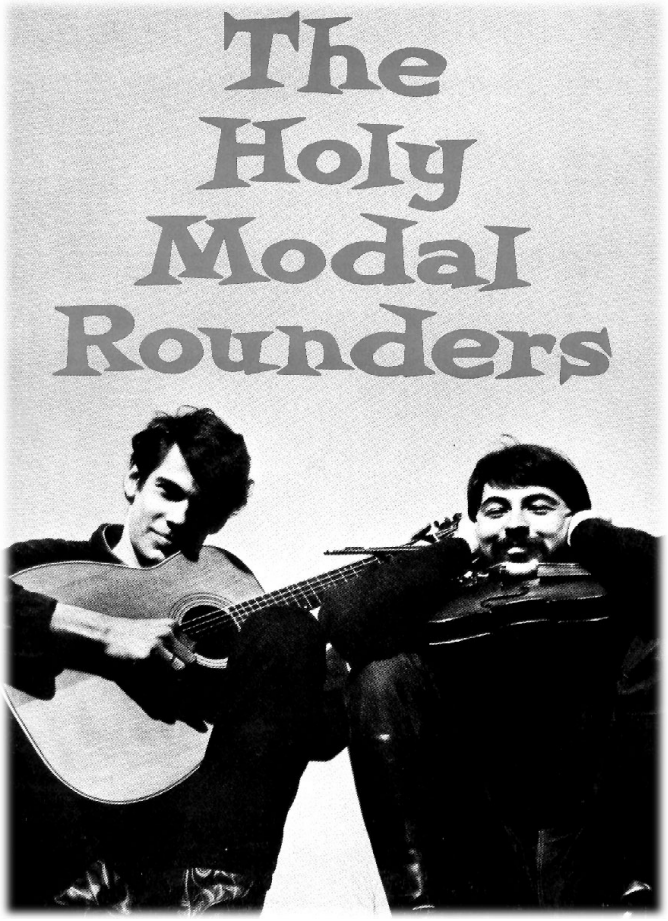
PS What got me into early folk music was, at a certain point, I was running into fewer and fewer really cool songs that I hadn't heard. You know, because of the limitations of the form. And the fact that we're talking two and three chord songs that are all somewhat similar, with very few exceptions, like 'Man of Constant Sorrow' in which the actual verse-chorus is not the tonic. A rare example of a folk song that is more irregular, and hence compelling, that most of them aren't. So that's one thing about it. Like a lot of people think about folk, folk means 'acoustic' to a lot of people. I just read about that New Zealand folk-parody duo, [Flight of the Conchords] just played in Edinburgh. One of them said that they're thought of as folksters, but actually they're acoustic-sters! So 'folk' is actually just a piece of the action and something that's sort of grown from it, so to speak. The whole acoustic unplugged thing is, on one level, a more modern tributary of the river of folk that goes back centuries and centuries.

EP When did you start The Holy Modal Rounders? This was in Greenwich Village...

PS In May 1963. In the Lower East Side of New York City. Hipper than The Village!

EP Your first two records are mostly American roots music versions, but then your later stuff, which is interesting, like Alleged in their Time, there's a real mixture of popular songs and ragtime with the folk materials. You're not drawing so many lines.

PS Well in 1963 I had an epiphany. It wasn't an epiphany as a matter of fact...it was due to my heavy drug ingestion! One of which was...well, what would happen if you took the people on the Harry Smith Anthology and you transported them to 1963? And they were still the ages that they were in 1927 to 1933? In other words....youngish



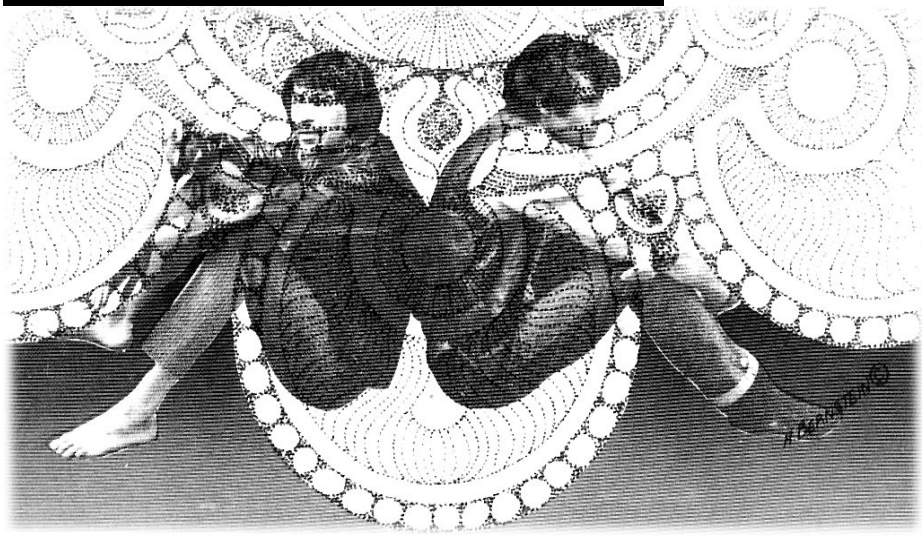
people, who of course tend to be a bit more malleable, in ways that older people [aren't]. And what if these people were then subjected to popular music? What would they do? I mean, would they run screaming or pick up shamrocks and start hurling them, or would they incorporate it? So before that, I knew it was 'don't do anything post 1939'. I believed - as it turned out, thousands of other people did as well - that if they did not personally keep this music alive themselves, it would die out and wither away, and it was [incumbent] on them. It was a very vainglorious concept, but thankfully it was such a widely-held idea that you had things like the *O Brother* movie coming out, almost half a century later. I mean, it's not - it's never going to blow away the top ten, but there's no way it's going to die away.

EP Right. So you had some idea you were going to reincarnate this music, or reincarnate the singers in some way.

PS Originally, yeah. I wanted to sound like, and be one of those old guys.

EP At about the same time in the UK we had all these so-called revivalists, such as Anne Briggs or

Shirley Collins, inspired by A L Lloyd and people



like this. There seemed to be some debate as to how true they are to the traditional sources of folk music, or whether they were being too true to the sources, whether they were trying too had to sing in the style of a rural folk singer, or whether in fact they were totally urban and very middle-class, and so forth. Debates about 'purity'.

PS Yes, I know. At the time, what's really funny, you went through a stage where folk music was being performed in 1961, say. On the one hand, you had the folk singers basically coming out of Pete Seeger. And then you have The Kingston Trio and all that they spawned, like the person who played banjo in the trio learned to play banjo in the Pete Seeger group. And if you listen to the voices of the Kingston Trio, they sound a lot like the group [The Four Preps] that did '26 miles across the sea'. A pop song from 1958. In fact, you can even see sort of a similarity - not in sophistication or the harmonies, but in the tone of the harmonies - between The Kingston Trio and The Beach Boys, and Jan and Dean. I mean, that sort of California voice.

EP I wonder if maybe that's why The Beach Boys covered 'Sloop John B'?

PS Anyway, my sub-point there was that the whole Kingston Trio / Brothers Four etcetera branch of folk music, which I loathed! I wanted to kill them all with a machine gun! They were evil, they were wrong.

EP What was wrong about it in your eyes?

PS They were SO not traditional. They were so clueless as to the way real folk music was. They were just taking the songs and doing it in - actually, they were simply another genre. Another branch of the mighty flow of folk, another tributary of the mighty folk river, folking away! At the time it really bothered me, but now I think 'so what?' It was 1961, and it's Greenwich Village, and there's people that are like Tom Paxton who was coming out of the Pete Seeger school, and one of the very few people that were actually writing original songs at the time. And then there's the traditionalists, who are trying to sound like the old stuff. And then there's a whole bunch of folk singers, that are actually coming out of acting school, and found folk music the easiest way to get on stage fast. And the acting school folk singers thought that the traditionalists were absolutely evil and wrong, because they had no respect for the stage and the traditions of the stage. They were just sitting there and playing music. There was a callous disregard for the holy craft of on-stageness! Whereas the traditionalists felt that the acting school people had absolutely no respect for the sacredness of the music, and that *they* were totally wrong! Totally evil and like perverted! The apostasy...like very religious, like blasphemy so to speak.

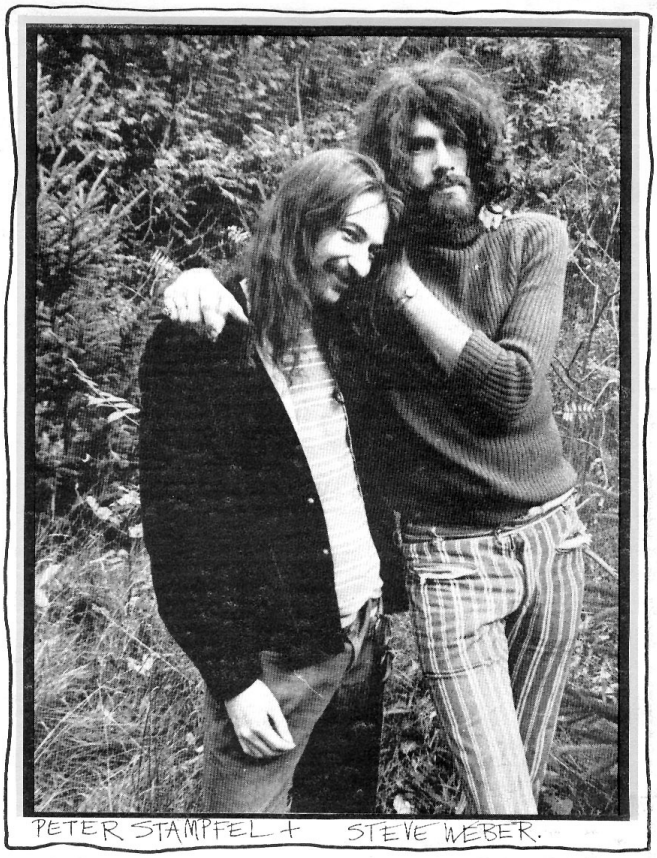
EP Did anything come of the acting side of things? Did they become famous, did they go on to become actors? Or did they just wither away?

PS Golly, good question - never really thought about it much. Well, Hoyt Axton went on to a really successful acting career. I met him in 1960 playing at The Fox and Hunter in San Francisco and he was a straight, one of the non-bohemian young guys that picked up on a guitar, and had a very...he was a young hunk! And the girls really dug him! I know his mother wrote 'Heartbreak Hotel', so I'm not sure about the exact path of how he - what inspired him to pick up the guitar and go and do folk music, but he did.

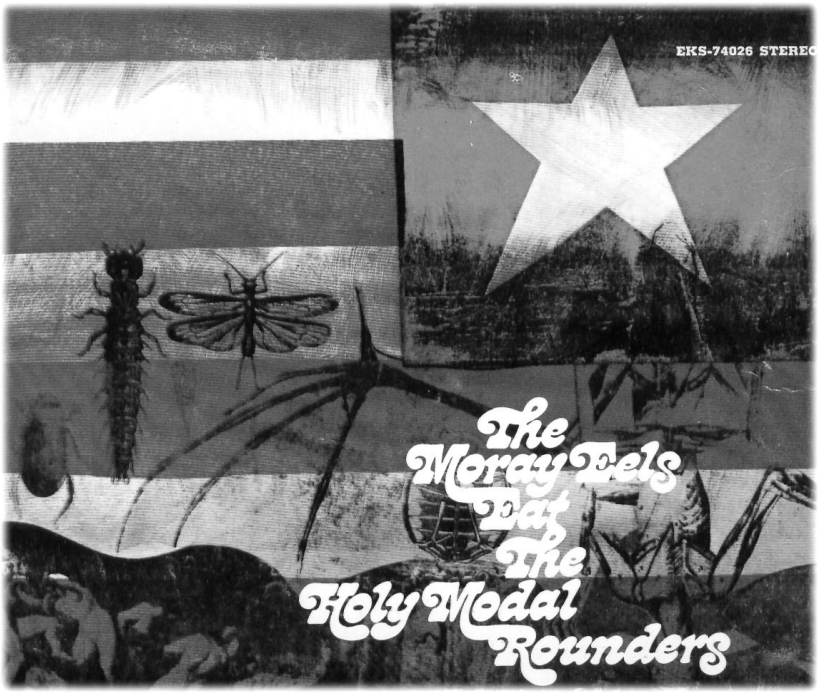
EP How about the *Indian War Whoop* record you made for ESP? Is there a story about that came about? Did you meet Bernard Stollman?

PS Bernard Stollman...well, one of the stories behind that is, I quit working with Steve Weber in 1965 because he refused to work out new songs and, when with me on stage, he would do this [tirade] - 'I'm sick! Why are we doing this old goddamn [music] - I'm so sick of these damn songs! Why can't we do something [new]?' This

whole tirade. Then after a while - well, working on a song was playing it three times. My theory is that this started when The Beatles hit [America]. That made him realise that there's some sort of a minor chance of us achieving some kind of a minor success. But before that, what we were doing was just so bizarre - I mean, my ex old lady [Antonia] introduced me and Weber. And she told me all these Weber stories before we met. And I had this picture of this evil amphetamine-head who did all these really bad things, big scary monstrous demonic person! When I finally met him - I mean, he's 19 years old and he looks like an idealised Lil Abner. And I heard him play guitar. 'Michael rowed the boat ashore', a song like that. My first impression was 'it's my long-lost brother that I never had.' And he had a steel string guitar. A cool guitar! Like I thought he'd have a nylon string guitar, like 'sneer, sneer'. He picked it up and started doing this finger-picking country blues stuff. I had no idea that - he was not only a traditionalist with chops, but he had a totally unique approach as well. Anyway - nevertheless, when we played we both took a bunch of amphetamine and started playing music, and it sounded perfect instantly. And I was playing in basket houses and so we went to the Village. We played all day long then went to do some gigs. And played non-stop for about three days! And on about the third day, there was a mirror at the Café Raffio, and I looked up and I saw the two of us in the mirror, and we had long hair back before it was that common - this was like May of 63 - and I thought 'That's absolutely one of the most wild-assed things I've ever seen!' The two of us. And it was like crazier than anything I'd ever conceived of in my life! 'We've gotta do this!!' Anyway, so it was great until - Weber was like, once we were going to work, I'd say 'Well, time to go to work!'. [Weber would say] 'No! No we're not!' 'But It's getting dark...we're gonna go to the Village cause it's getting dark. And we may as well take our instruments along, because we're gonna go to the Village.' So his bad attitude started to...after The Beatles hit, the line was whatever The Beatles do, it's bad for folk music but not The Holy Modal Rounders. The consensus was that whatever kibbosh it was putting on folk music somehow would elude us, because we had some kind of a weird quasi-affinity as it were. Anyway, so we broke up in the middle of 1965 and I quit playing with The Fugs as well. We were backing them up. Because I didn't want to play with Weber any more at all. And then Stollman came up to me in 1967 and said he wanted to make a Holy Modal Rounders record. I said, 'well the problem is that Weber won't work out any new songs!' At the time I was playing with Sam Shepard and some other people, so we went into the studio totally cold, because Weber didn't rehearse, and we took a bunch of speed. I mean, the first record was done on amphetamine and pop. So it wasn't a case of - 'uh-oh, amphetamine is going to make for bad music', because certainly the first two records are just fine, and we were speeding our tits off, as the expression goes! Anyway, Stollman wouldn't allow Sam to be on the cover. It was August of '67 and Sam was so fed up with the summer of love bullshit that he cut his hair off, so he had this really short crewcut as a protest against the flowers in your hair crap. So it was the wrong haircut! You can imagine how cool it would have been to have had a 24 year-old crew-cutted Sam Shepard [on the cover]...it would have been just [great]. But you know...furthermore, he was supposed to pay us $150 apiece. Me and Weber and Sam. And he gave me and Weber the 150, but he stiffed Sam. And I ran into him a couple years ago and asked about it, 'Gee, shouldn't we be getting royalties for that record? Never got any mechanicals, royalties, and what about the Italian reissue and the German reissue? And maybe some money is due from that?' And he explained that in the contract we signed, we signed them [our rights] all away. The idea was that he could pay us $150 apiece - which, of course, he didn't even do that - and in exchange he owes us no mechanical



royalties and no performance royalties, ever ever ever!



EP That happened to virtually everyone on the ESP label, didn't it?

PS Yes indeed. His story was that - the first record he made that really did well was the first Fugs record, and as soon as he hit the charts the Mob came along and bootlegged the record and sold copies to all the stores. Bernard claims that as soon as a record by a small company hits the charts, what would happen was that the Mob would come along and make their own copies, which of course wouldn't cost them anything. I've no idea to what degree that's true, but that's his version. Anyway, so the record was unrehearsed for, and I didn't go to the mixing session because I didn't have a clue and I'm a really slow learner and I wouldn't have approved of having no grooves on the record. And what's weird about that, besides the fact that the same thing happened with the Elektra record, you know they didn't put groves between [each track], so it's impossible to play on the radio. But when....we signed with Prestige because Paul Rothschild, we thought he was OK because he smoked dope! And we knew that he wouldn't have a problem with us smoking dope in the studio. We could have gone to Elektra or Vanguard. And two weeks after he signed us, lying through his teeth about the contract...it was like 'have a load of dope and I'll explain the contract to you...lie lie lie lie lie!' Two weeks after he signed the contract he quit and went to Elektra, and we were kind of, you know, marooned there [at Prestige]. Which is why the second album had no original songs on it. We basically wanted to just get out of it, here are the two albums. We purposely didn't do anything original on the second album because we wanted to make it as unpleasant as possible, so they would released us. And then we went to Elektra to see Paul, and say 'Well here we are'. And Rothschild explained that he just took a bunch of LSD and had this revelation of The Holy Modal Rounders. We should come out with a single! But not a 45! A 78! And...Okay! And what's the other idea? An album with no spaces between the songs! So...no singles, no airplay. It was going to be really cosmic, there would be no blithers between the songs, it would be just like when you take LSD! It would replicate the experience. There a number of people coming up to me and saying that their first hallucinogenic experience gave them hallucinations about the Holy Modal Rounders! So in a way we could kind of see where he was coming from, but isn't it odd that these three separate people all had the same idea, the same bad idea, which they...

EP So you're a bit disappointed by that Moray Eels LP on Elektra, is that what you're saying?

PS Well, actually...it's been reissued. There's an article in *Mojo* about it. It's in the 'lost masterpieces' category! Richard Unterberger wrote the liner notes to it, and he is also of the opinion that it's a 'lost masterpiece' of late 60s psychedelia, and I'd always wanted, if it was to be reissued, to do liner notes explaining why the record was the way it was, because...so the company agreed to let me do my own notes to it, so Richard wrote these really nice notes to it and I had the space to explain explain explain....and the combination of Richard's notes and my lengthy explanation and the CD itself, I'm happy with it. The only thing I really hate about it is my execrable vocal on 'If you wanna be a bird'. I mean, I just - I explain at length why it was that way.

EP Oh, but that's one of the most distinctive sounds in the history of recorded music! Everybody knows it!

PS No, it's terrible! But the rest of the album...well, there's a lot of good songs on it. □

FREE 103.9 RADIO SPECIAL

It's an NYC Radio Project...they have a mobile microtransmitter which broadcasts to antennae of local listeners around the Williamsburg area in NYC, and they've been doing it since around 1997. A focal point for local Brooklyn talents, they bring in all manner of things like live performances, turntablists, dance music, jazz, rock bands, and assorted live events. Even the DJs are improvisers, not simply playing records, and they like to think they're using radio in a free, creative way. The CD-Rs below represent, I suppose, a smattering of their output and might be taken as snapshots of a typical hour's worth of broadcasting. They are extremely listenable and entertaining documents - put them on and replicate a highly unusual radio experience at home! The founders of the project appear to be DJ Dizzy and Greg Anderson, and the artists Matt Bua, Barry London, Matt Mikas, Tom Roe and Seth Price are some of the key players; they're all associated with such things as electronics, turntables, samples and analogue synths, all used in an engagingly direct and spontaneous way.

Various Artists

Sprung: Audio Dispatch 03

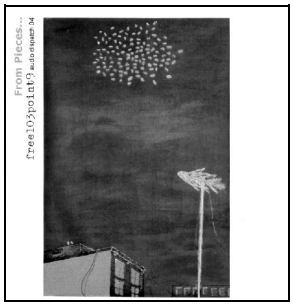
USA FREE103POINT9 NO NUMBER CD-R (2002)

Sprung is an entertaining and intriguing mix of instrumental music and sound-collage work. There's electropop instrumentals, mostly by Seth Price, who uses fine analogue synths for his melody lines; he's also partial to a disco beat and a low-fi recording approach. There are radio samples, strange textures, and many pieces with a perplexing shapelessness which adds to that feeling of a loose-limbed free-for-all radio broadcast. My favourite pieces are the group efforts by Ryan Holsopple, Matt Bua, Matt Mikas, and Tom Roe - these are complex noise scapes generated by turntables, live electronics and samples and I can't get enough of them. On two of their cuts, they're joined by one Transmaniacon MC, a DJ named after a Blue Öyster Cult song.

Various Artists

From Pieces...Audio Dispatch 04

USA FREE103POINT9 NO NUMBER CD-R (2002)



From Pieces...is a good 'artistic' compilation, full of more lo-fi brutalist approaches to using electronics and good simplistic methods. Matt Bua is well represented here with 6 diverse cuts and has a particularly interesting range as a solo artist with drones, found voices and electronics. The Nuzion Piano Trio provide dissonant, avant improv with acoustic instruments - strings and piano. The trio of Barry London, Matt Mikas and Tom Roe do ingenious electronic and turntabling segments, making great use of found records which are decidedly odd. Their track 'A Sort of Strange, Halting Music' reminds one of the first Residents LP. Also here, another turntabling trio called DizzySparkle and a very odd track by a sextet playing daf drum, bongos, bass and hurdy-gurdy with two tap-dancers. It sounds like an urban ethnic recording. Fine painting cover by Chris Millstein.

Sightings

Audio Dispatch 06

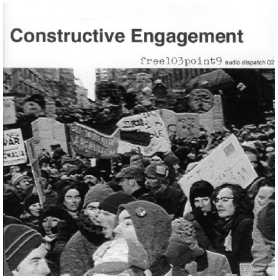
USA FREE103POINT9 NO NUMBER CD-R (2002)

Sightings is a document of a live event they organised in January 2002, and a more raw and vital document of a live band you couldn't wish for. This primitive rock trio deliver good brutal punk thrash. The singer moans like a wounded elephant, the bass thwomps you in the stomach, the guitar clanks along like a division of half track tanks. Their brand of rock ain't particularly loud, but it sure is nasty and filled with teen angst. Compare with more commercially available and probably better quality recordings, but if you're 'into' this combo then you'll want to track down a copy of this CD-R, which is incidentally one of the few CDs I have that actually crackles like a scratched-up LP! Scuzz thug-punk at its most despicable. Hats off to Mark Morgan, Richard Hoffman and Jon Lockie.

Various Artists

Constructive Engagement: Audio Dispatch 02

USA FREE103POINT9 NO NUMBER CD-R (2002)



Constructive Engagement is their 'protest' record. Made up almost entirely of live radio broadcasts captured at demonstrations at the World Economic Forum, manipulated by DJs and mixmasters. Record samples are mixed in with the live broadcasts, some of which take significant phrases and make them into loops. Rambling and overlong, this seems to be too much of an 'insider' item that doesn't communicate very much to anyone who didn't take part in the protests. As a listening experience, it's only mildly diverting.

Matt Bua / Matt Mikas / Tom Roe

Of The Bridge

USA FREE103POINT9 AD005 12" VINYL SINGLE (ND)

Of the batch sent, this is the only vinyl offering and in some ways one of the most interesting. Bua, Mikas and Roe work together to create - in music and video - a hymn to the Williamsburg Bridge in NYC. The 45rpm side melds some very busy field recordings captured from this bridge: traffic, trains, citizens, construction workers, and combines them low-key home-made electronic sounds and samples, to create a vital and colourful piece of pop-art noise-scape music. There's even a few samples of a Sonny Rollins jazz workout, called 'The Bridge' naturally enough. If you buy the CD-R version of this release, you get a version of the movie video they made, playable on QuickTime.

The 33rpm B side is, to my taste, slightly less compelling, with lots of disco beats - plus further samples, dub effects, edits and remix-style approaches. It is done in very avant mode, and arguably a pretty radical reworking of dance or beat-based music (if more of it sounded like this, I might be more interested in the genre!). But overall it's laid-back, and lacks the crucial power of the A side, which remains a powerful urban statement - and one that's very much 'plugged in' to their local area. The Williamsburg Bridge is close to their nexus of operations, and perhaps they see it a kind of metaphor, a gateway between their site of creativity and their intended audience, the rest of the world. Judging by the effect they create on this record, it's a dynamic portal with a lot of interesting traffic coming in and going out.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

302 Bedford Ave #261, Brooklyn, NY 11211, USA
www.screwmusicforever.com/free103/freemenu.html

ADVERTISEMENT

"THE UK INDEPENDENT PRESS HAS PRETTY MUCH GONE DOWN THE TOILET IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, WITH ONLY TITLES SUCH AS CHAOTIC ORDER OR THE SOUND PROJECTOR PROVIDING ANY SIGNS OF LIFE." - RIK RAWLING.

CHAOTIC ORDER MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION COVERING THE MORE BIZARRE END OF MEDIA AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY, OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS INCLUDING EVERYTHING FROM NICK ZEDD TO BUFFY AND WHITEHOUSE TO OBSERVATIONS ON POP CULTURE.

ISSUE 16 FEATURES INTERVIEWS WITH CHICAGO FILMMAKER KRISTIE ALSHAIBI, PORN PRODUCER / DIRECTOR ALEX LADD AND 'INHERENTLY ODD' SEATTLE BAND FEAR OF DOLLS. ARTICLES ON JAPANESE MONDO 'DEATH WOMEN', ARTISTS MARK RYDEN / TREVOR BROWN / GOTTFRIED HELNWEIN, MODERN PRIMITIVE CELEBRATION, HELLRAISER + ART BY RIK RAWLING, FICTION BY ALEX SEVERIN, REVIEWS AND MUCH MORE.

AVAILABLE FOR £2.50 (CASH / CHEQUE) / 4 EURO OR $5.00 (CASH ONLY) PAYABLE TO "CHAOTIC ORDER"

CHAOTIC ORDER, 15 DIGBY CLOSE, DODDINGTON PARK, LINCOLN, LN6 3PZ, UK.

E-MAIL : BOB@CHAOTICORDER.FREESERVE.CO.UK

OFFER : MENTION SOUND PROJECTOR WITH YOUR ORDER & GET AN EXTRA ISSUE FREE

CHAOTIC ORDER MAIL ORDER

ALTERNATIVE, EXTREME OR JUST PLAIN STRANGE ZINES, CDS, DVDS, BOOKS ETC, INCLUDING BERT SWITZER, WHITEHOUSE, CRITICAL VISION, MIDNIGHT SYNDICATE, CERAMIC HOBS, MARQUIS, TREVOR BROWN, JUDAS KISS, NAKED, RICHARD KERN, KEROVNIAN, BARDOSENETICCUBE, MERZBOW, MICHAEL MANNING, ADVERSE EFFECT AND MUCH MORE. ALSO A LARGE AMOUNT OF RARE SECONDHAND ITEMS TO CLEAR...

FOR A 24 PAGE CATALOGUE WRITE TO THE ADDRESS ABOVE OR E-MAIL.

AESOVA

Tu m' and the Magical Mystery Orchestra CD

Norbert Moslang "Distilled" 3" CD

Also, 3" CDRs by Tu m', Twin, Mora+A, John Hudak, Sawako, Frans de Waard, V.V., others...

Soon: V.V. "Wilderness" CD

- - - - - - - - -

WWW.AESOVA.ORG

PO BOX 1811 48826 USA

A-MUSIK

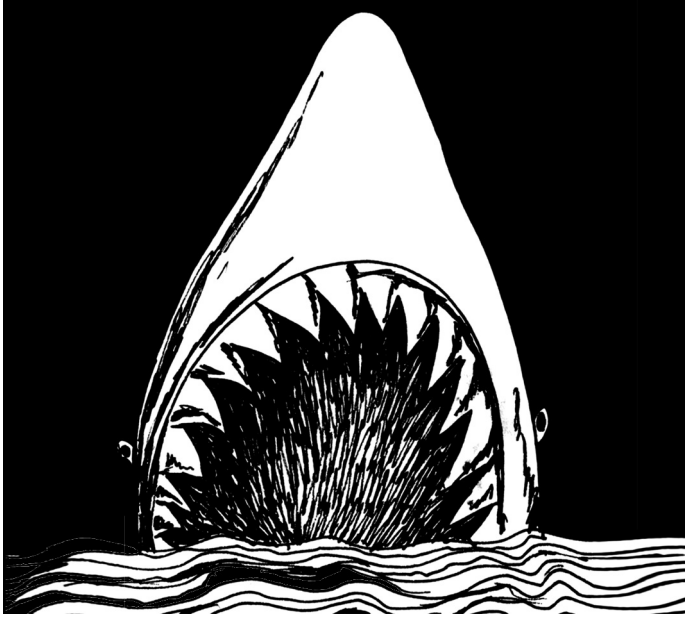
SHOP MAILORDER DISTRIBUTION

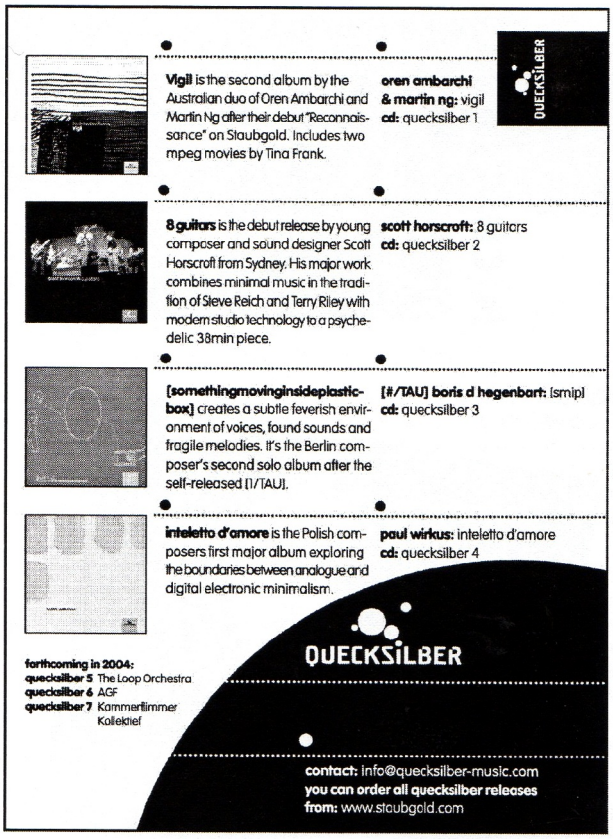
EXPERIMENTE AVANTGARDE ELEKTRONIK IMPROV

KL. GRIECHENMARKT 28-30, 50676 KÖLN, GERMANY

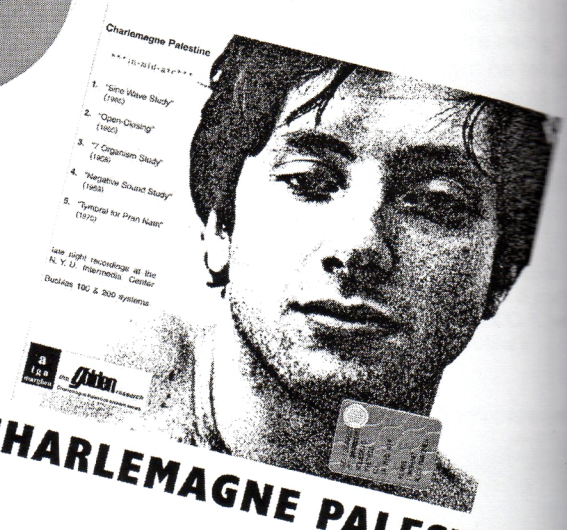
OPEN WEDNESDAY - SATURDAY 12-19H

WWW.A-MUSIK.COM





MAX NEUHAUS



CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE

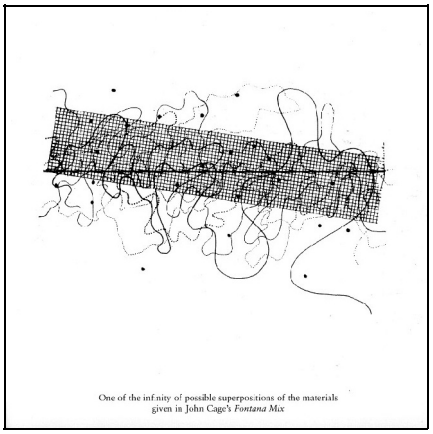
IN THE ART GALLERY

MICHAEL J SCHUMACHER

PIETRO GROSSI

JORGE ANTUNES

In the ART GALLERY



Max Neuhaus

Fontana Mix - Feed (six realizations of John Cage)

ITALY ALGA MARGHEN PLANA-N 18NMN 044 CD (2003)

A seriously essential collection which documents highly important live electronic music realisations by a singular, tough-minded and gifted interpreter. It's a fucking belter of a CD!!! To think I was aged five when the first recordings here were being created, and The Beatles were still dribbling away making their Rubber Soul LP. Even before this, the original Fontana Mix source materials were prepared by John Cage in 1958, at the Studio di Fonologia in Milan for Italian Radio. Being John Cage, he dealt more in actions than in conventional scored compositions, and prepared a set of precise instructions predicated on chance operations that were available for interpretation in many ways, and these were acted on by different pro-active musicians who had the vision and the balls to do something with it. David Tudor (a life-long Cage disciple) did it with an amplified prepared piano. Cornelius Cardew (another Cage disciple who would, in time, rebel against the master) did it with a guitar. A version of Fontana Mix for magnetic tape alone was released on the Vox label (available in this country as the Turnabout LP TV 340465) in 1965. None of this however quite prepares you for what Max Neuhaus was going to do.

On this CD, you get no fewer than six recordings which document what took place when this single-minded young avantist took his kit on the road and performed the Fontana Mix instructions in his own singular way on stage between 1965 and 1968. He did it in his early 20s, and even managed to get a performance in at Carnegie Hall in New York. On one performance here you can hear people laughing, partly perhaps with scepticism, or perhaps with that relief that sweeps over a man when he sees the potentialities of freedom opened before him. Neuhaus was so successful with his continued application towards this method of performance that he later succeeded in recording and releasing an LP for Columbia Masterworks in 1968, an LP now considered to be the first-ever live electronics record. Nowadays when any halfwit with £1000 and a laptop can jump onto a music festival stage, press buttons and receive rapturous accolades from the press, the achievement of Neuhaus makes them all look like the floundering dopes they surely are. Inflamed with the vision of what Cage's instructional score could offer, he took his percussion equipment - and his cartloads of electronic equipment, including not a few homemade devices - out on the road, and proved the point not once, but time and again. He was one of the first people to introduce the Cagean idea that acoustic feedback (then normally regarded as an undesirable fault) could be an effective method for generating sound, many years before Jimi Hendrix, Cream or other rock musicians.

Neuhaus in fact produced his own score called Feed using the chance operations described in Cage's Fontana Mix score. To give the works here their full due and full title we need to refer to them as Fontana Mix-Feed. He took his percussion instruments - drums and cymbals - put microphones near to them, and discovered he was generating an acoustic feedback loop. The loop in turn produced resonating frequencies which, when the amplified noise from the loudspeaker hit against it, made the percussion instrument vibrate naturally. In a live setting, you have only to pause to think to imagine the devastating results. The entire room - and soon the entire audience - would be caught up in a loop of continually feeding-back noise, Neuhaus controlled everything live on stage, using a basic mixing desk. This release advises us that to reproduce the full effect of the original performance (which I assume label boss Emanuele Carcano did) you should arrange your speakers just so and play this CD VERY LOUD in attempt to recreate the intensity of the original experience. Dare you?

Six totally different versions of roaring, screeching acoustic textures stream out of this CD and proceed to tear your head open from the inside. From the variety of each performance you see the uniqueness and complexity of Cage's brilliant approach to generating music. From one simple set of parameters, he was able (through the hands of someone as gifted as this performer at least) to generate a near-infinite variety of musical events. The exploration of these possibilities is surely a grand-scaled work which has only just begun, and one wishes more people were willing to take up the challenge. Totally unlike conventional classical composition which guarantees (demands) identical results for every performance, this is an approach which positively thrives on the human qualities of variety and change, and chance. As MN puts it, 'it seems something alive'. And you will feel this alive-ness too, as you unleash the six slithering snakes of deliciously vital noise into your room and feel that everything you thought you knew about musical composition up to this point has been shown up as utter nonsense. This is what's real. One of the best live electronic records ever released, and a testament to the enduring genius of the ideas of John Cage. If you thought you would never 'understand' the work of this composer, here is the place to start - it's obvious. Get this.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Emanuele Carcano, via Frapolli 40, 20133 Milan, Italy
algamarghen@iol.it

Michael J Schumacher

Room Pieces

USA XI RECORDS XI 127 2 x CD (2003)

Phew - here's a monumental 'spacey' work for you. Five substantial pieces of beautiful music spread over two very long CDs by this accomplished American modern composer, who first came our way on 1997's CD Flood, a great collaboration with the guitarist Donald Miller. I can recommend this collection without batting an eyelid to lovers of both AMM and Morton Feldman...Schumacher has that same centre of stillness that you find in the best of Feldman, and he generates occasional flurries of musical activity orbiting around it, not unlike a lengthy AMM workout.

The first CD alone is pretty staggering. 2002's 'Room Piece XI' is a 76 minute composition of rare beauty, which immediately gives you this tremendous sense of open space. It successfully delineates, defines and orders a vast imaginary space with precision and imagination....it's like exploring a huge labyrinth of the mind, and the cover image of an endless ancient warehouse with its tilted floors, corridors, endless windows and doors is entirely fitting. It's a beautiful place to stay. 'Room Piece' creates a quiet mood set up by a peaceful droning ambience, and the tiniest of tiny sounds floating within it - the tinkle of a quiet piano, faint percussive clicks, all of which defy belief with

their strong presence and audibility, due to the excellence of the recording and the pressing. It's as though the composer, having ushered you into this underground warehouse lair, were dangling a tiny spider's web before your eyes, and you were able to discern an entire nest of baby spiders suspended in a glistening silver web - everything clearly visible in the same depth of focus as the deep perspective around you. The meditative mood is occasionally disturbed by a sudden outburst - staccato violins, a strange sucking and gurgling groan...this floating noise is like an alien chimera flashing past you in a large purple cloud of bitterness. 'Room Piece' is genuinely big enough (and of sufficient duration) for the listener to get completely lost exploring it...incredibly well-considered and realised, this is a profound and effective piece of sonic architecture.

It may come as no surprise that 'Room Piece XI' is the latest in a chain of variant Room Pieces. It's been developed over several years, and in different versions and incarnations. Schumacher has done it as a gallery installation piece and as performance versions; if you experience the installation manifestation, you enter a room filled with loudspeakers, which hark back to the multiple-speaker experiments he's been carrying out since the 1980s. He composed it using samples of pianos, voices and other acoustic instruments, and the entire work is played back in real time by a computer. But no linear programmer he, Schumacher assembles his work to play back on algorithmic principles, so that there's a complicated interchange of the multiple parts, and no two playback-performances are ever quite identical. He expresses his firm belief in 'sacred geometry', a concept which dates back to Renaissance science, and a time when art and mathematics could co-exist happily in the hands of talented artists. You've only got to look at the work of Piero della Francesca, whose 'Flagellation of Christ' painting is an astonishing investigation of deep space principles, using not only perspective but solid geometry techniques to arrive at a rational analysis of light in space. Impressed writers speak warmly of Schumacher having created a 'conceptual universe in miniature', and that listening to 'Room Piece' is like 'dreaming in a world that is immense'.

Four more compositions await you yet, on 2nd CD. 'Piece in 3 parts' has some crazy violin and percussion work, somehow put into combinations that make these instruments sound very unfamiliar. It starts off totally frenetic - a real shock after the mesmeric peacefulness of 'Room Piece' - with the violin sawing, plucking and generally going nuts, before more or less settling down to a gentle drone (stroked percussion perhaps), its serenity broken up with several harsh interruptions of electronic noise, belting their way into the piece. Amazingly, this long (20 minute) composition comprises just a few seconds' worth of samples of violinist Jane Henry and percussionist Tim Barnes; their moments of energy have been built into a powerful statement and sustained throughout whole length. There's more string work by cellist Charles Curtis on 'Still' from 2002, another profound and slow-moving drone piece that's clearly an outcrop of the larger 'Room Piece'. Schumacher's work forms pretty much an organic whole when you put it together. 'Untitled' from 1999, the favourite of an awed Ian Nagoski, could be the record's show stopper, and is a colossus of loud droning. Recommendation is that it be played 'immensely loud', but even if you fail to follow this instruction the deep vibrations of it will seek you out anyway, no matter where you hide. Built out of sine waves and frequency modulation, this a huge static tornado of electronic noise, in which you can still somehow perceive all the debris of its wreckage moving slowly at the centre. Overwhelming - big, loud and long in the way that American artists do best. The final track is a continuation of 'Still', whose high quality recording made me think that digital studio methods, if used properly, stand a chance of making good on the promise delivered by 20th century avant garde music. I mean, what even greater power could Xenakis have unleashed if he'd had access to the range of tools that Schumacher is using? Virtual sounds, combined with real playing, samples and acoustic recordings, can make the music sharper, clearer and more devastating in new exciting ways, making the notion of a full symphony orchestra look a bit silly. This is a significant release.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 1754, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, USA
xirecords@compuserve.com
www.xirecords.org

Charlemagne Palestine

In Mid-Air

ITALY ALGA MARGHEN PLANA-P 19NMN 047 CD (2003)

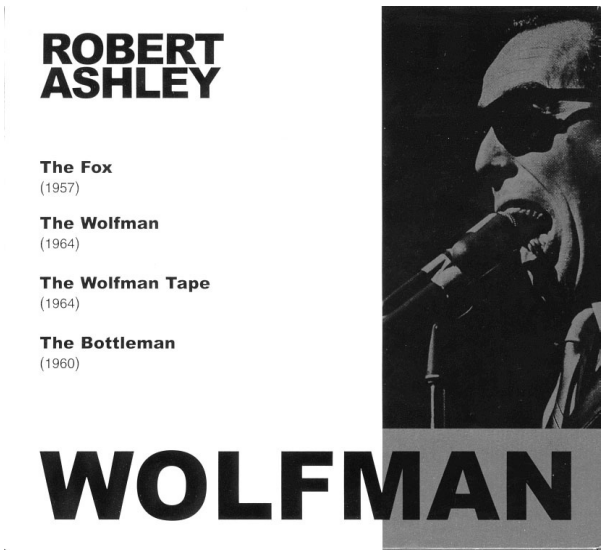
This is another release in the 'Golden Research' series from Alga Marghen that delve into the Palestine archive of sound recordings. This one concentrates exclusively on his sine-wave and Buchla systems work from 1967 to 1970 (although there is conflicting information about the dates on the sleeve). These totally electronic works - all described as 'late night electronic sonorities' - are pitched at varying degrees of shrill, piercing and ear-damaging attack. The first cut 'Sine Tone Study' (from 1965 or 1967, depending on which side of the cover you

believe) is particularly painful. The five pieces are all totally minimal and, for the most part, barely changing single-tone emanations which gather overtones, and are filled with a rich yet slightly attenuated sound spectrum. 'Seven Organism Study' does grow more lively, with additional notes and subtle effects like occasional clangs and tiny whoopings added into the layers. One of the earlier pieces 'Open + Closing' also recycles another work, 'Holy 1+2', creating a quite different sound world out of it by simply adjusting the speed (of the oscillations, or the tape playback?) As you may recall 'Holy 1 + 2' was also issued by this label in minuscule quantities as a double LP, separating out the two (normally overlaid) sound sources so you could spin them at home and play at being Charlemagne for a day.

The two most successful experiments are the long works at end of CD. 'Negative Sound Study' is much more abstract than the semi-tuneful droners which precede it, and soon acquires the proportions of a slow-moving gust of wind heard from the bottom of a storm cellar. The artist manipulates his tone well, moving it down into unbearably low, almost black pitches and depths, then allowing it to soar up in the air again, carrying on in like manner back and forth for some 23 blissful minutes. Simple movements, but then simplicity is what he's all about. 'Timbral for Pran Nath' is from 1970 and, also less tuneful, is like a slowed-down train whistle which blows non-stop for about 15 minutes. Man, I hope I never meet that train pulling out of Grand Central! This abstract hymn, dedicated to one of his former gurus, grows slightly dissonant and sharp (as indeed did Pran Nath himself in later life) as the sonorities are manipulated in real time. It's hard to pin down, but with this one and the preceding cut, you really get the sense that Palestine was shaping the music up with his very hands as he controlled the emission of these floating, ethereal tones. He's both sculpting and painting in sound. These recordings come closest, I think, to him realising his dream of 'an enormous sonorous three-dimensional sculptural canvas in mid-air.'

You can see from this, I guess, why sectors of the academic musical community tended to give Palestine the cold shoulder throughout the 1960s and 1970s. He was making it look too easy, at a time when it was better for all concerned that the production of electronic music remain a mystery that shut out the general public - and if not a mystery, then something too hard for us to understand (hence difficult graphic scores); and if all else failed, then something too expensive and exclusive for the likes of us (hence costly electronic and computer equipment, locked safely away in the ivory towers of Universities and other establishments). Plus, Charlemagne preferred (and still does) to experiment by intuition, finding out for himself by empirical methods, instead of following the rigorous analytical / intellectual approaches proscribed by, say, the Darmstadt school. One might look at the story of Swedish composer Rune Lindblad, to whom a similar fate befell.

Worst of all, Palestine actually enjoyed what he was doing! His enthusiasm - described here in his liner notes - indicate how he was seized by a personal fascination to discover what he could about sound from an early age, and throughout his career he's been driven by that same passion. Specific to electronic drones, he claims that



everyday machine sounds first inspired him in this area (fridge motors, and so on) but also, as an urban-dwelling teenager, any sounds to do with motion - planes, cars, trains, helicopters. When he first heard serious electronic music composition, his first instinct was to try it for himself. He couldn't wait! He bought himself a tape recorder, made simple collages, and made discoveries as he 'fooled with reverb tricks and bass/treble tone knob filterings'. Soon after this, he beheld an oscilloscope and saw what sound waves looked like. He studied the works of Helmholtz for himself, and, inspired by his simple vision of sound as both sculpture and painting (see above), started to use basic tone generators, later augmented by Buchla, Moog and Arp synthesisers. Latterly he's been doing it with Yamaha synths, and is building a small studio at his home in Brussels to pursue this side of his work - but remains motivated by his semi-mystical and spiritual quest in pursuit of the 'Golden Sonority'. Listeners are advised to tune in here for evidence from the days when he did it all through analogue methods; while not perhaps as totally crucial as the first two discs in this series, this is important and historical music and - at its best - almost monumental in its reach.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

Emanuele Carcano, via Frapolli 40, 20133 Milan, Italy
algamarghen@iol.it

Erkki Kurenniemi

Äänityksiä / Recordings (1963 - 1973)

FINLAND LOVE RECORDS LXCD 637 CD (2002)

Even if he had never recorded a single piece of music in his life, Erkki Kurenniemi would still rank as one of the few true Renaissance men of the 20th century. Creator of the world's first commercially manufactured and marketed microcomputer (1973) and also of a range of synthesisers including the DIMI-O which converted video images into music in real time (the DIMI-O came out about 1971), Kurenniemi has also worked in art media such as experimental short films, photography, oil painting, electronic sculpture and computer-arts, and for a time in the 1980s he was designing industrial automation systems (so he would been involved in robotics design) for a few companies including Nokia. Amazing that he has any time and energy left over for his current regular job (or hobby as it may be) as a university nuclear physics professor. If he is also engaged in building his own Cruise missile for under the euro equivalent of US $5000 in his backyard sauna, the rest of us should all give up and revert to living in caves and hunting mammoths (assuming there are any still around).

All of the recordings gathered on this CD are good: full of energy and exuberant confidence, well-constructed and amazingly clear despite the passing of time, and frequently very funny. An early highlight, and in my view the best track, is 'On / Off', a very powerful piece of ur-industrial music spitting with energy and hiss, recorded in real time with no tape collage, just Herr K turning and flicking knobs and switches with his hands and feet and winding reels of tape back and forth by hand in the Electronic Music Studio at the University of Helsinki, and sure to rearrange many brain and nerve cells. 'Sähkösoittimen ääniä #4' is another early highlight, equally powerful though its elements are basic - a drone masquerading as a spy plane swooping and dipping dangerously close to a victim. (I have never seen the Hitchcock movie North by Northwest but I understand there is a famous scene where a cropduster chases Cary Grant on the ground.) Some tracks call to mind Raymond Scott who was also building his own electronic music instruments and composing music with them during the period of Kurenniemi's recordings. And as Scott was fond of using certain melodies again and again, so particular motifs if not melodies recur throughout this CD - sometimes the music speeds up or slows down, or simply climbs the musical scale - as though our man was awed by the capabilities of his inventions and was curious, even eager to find out how far they could go and wanted to preserve the results for posterity - and they do go far indeed!

The interest level can flag with 'Preludi' which verges on self-indulgence and is an example of the musical themes Kurenniemi liked to explore. The last two tracks on the CD, 'Virsi' and 'Mix Master Universe 2' are (at times) amusing tape collages in which spoken voice recordings (some deliberate, some accidental - Kurenniemi often used pre-recorded tape reels with the result that previous recordings, not necessarily his, find their way into the music) compete with little harpsichord-like ditties that race in circles chasing their own tails and other snippets and squiggles of melodies and rhythm patterns. At one point, Kurenniemi gets his friends together for a sing-along with a musical accompaniment that sounds like a children's pots-n-pans ensemble barely hanging together. It's this combination of humour (check out 'Nimetön' which seems to parody itself), a keen sensitivity for sonic structure and an enthusiastic spirit for adventure and improvisation that lifts this set of recordings high into their own realm of greatness.

You do sense though that Kurenniemi's restlessness and all-rounder talents may have been as much an impediment as an asset in his attempts to push his inventions past the prototype stage and his music outside his immediate circle of academic colleagues and avant-garde notables such as Karlheinz Stockhausen; comparing him with Raymond Scott who refused to develop his inventions commercially and market them is apt. (I don't think that having been born in Finland would have been that much of an obstacle - in those days if you were Finnish and you needed a big enough market to flog something, you went next door to Sweden. But in those days I think people were not conceptually prepared for electronic music per se, let alone any of Kurenniemi's multimedia ideas - even now, many people in my country Australia cannot conceive of synthesisers, let alone all the technology that has superseded them, as being other than substitutes for traditional acoustic instruments.) If Kurenniemi had some of Scott's stubbornness and if Scott had some of Kurenniemi's entrepreneurial acumen they might have revolutionised electronic music at a much earlier time and electronic music as we know it might be twenty years ahead of where it actually is now.

JENNIFER HOR

www.lovemusic.fi

Robert Ashley

The Wolfman

ITALY ALGA MARGHEN PLANA-A 20NMN 048 CD (2003)

Four exceptional pieces of work by the great Robert Ashley taken from the peak of his career as a Sonic Arts Union 'player'. Reckoned to be one of the great Cage-influenced composers, here's evidence of how he embodied Cagean ideas of chance operations and use of feedback. Cage is generally credited with being the first composer to embrace feedback as a desirable element in music; for his influence elsewhere, see the Max Neuhaus CD above, also on Alga Marghen. Ashley's most famous work 'The Wolfman' is a blistering piece from 1964, combining tapework, feedback and vocal performance - so significant and powerful that Alga Marghen have also issued this 18-minute track as a limited pressing one-sided vinyl LP, complete with luxury silkscreen cover and an accordingly luxurious price tag. 'The Wolfman' is certainly an amazing sonic blast, and the robustness of its sonic attack (which reaches an unbearable fever pitch after only 6 minutes in) has led many listeners to this day to misapprehend it as the sound of a man screaming into a microphone. This is somewhat to Ashley's chagrin, as it's far from the truth - his vocal performance in fact consists of very gentle humming sounds; the gist of it is a series of explorations of vowel sounds, based on very precise breath intakes of the performer, and specific jaw, tongue and throat movements. The screaming power of it derives not from his voice, but from feedback. He starts off with playback of a pre-taped piece - either using the six-minute 'Wolfman Tape', or (as here) the 18-minute 'The 4th of July', which is a simple documentary recording of his neighbour's backyard party becoming distorted through layers of tape-head feedback. With his full understanding of acoustics and spatial dynamics, Ashley knew how feedback would behave in the performance auditorium - what guides him principally is something to do with ratios of volume of

space, and the 'spatial movement illusion' to be had from stereo recording playback. It is against this howling feedback arena that he pitches his amplified but gentle vocal sounds; any louder and they would simply cancel out the desired effect. That said, he wasn't averse to the drama of this piece; well aware that 'The Wolfman' quickly gained a reputation for being harmful to the listener's health (and probably proud of it!) he took to performing it wearing dark shades and illuminated by a single spotlight, trying to create suggestions of a sinister cabaret artist. Hence striking photo on cover - and are those his real teeth jutting out so horrifically?

'The Wolfman Tape', the other backing tape used for the above performance, is also heard here - though of course it was also used famously on Explosions, the Bob James Trio LP on the ESP-Disk label, which is a unique mixture of low-key free jazz combined with tapework from Robert Ashley and fellow composer Gordon Mumma. This original version is a pure tape-composition, taking radio fragments and other recordings, editing and vari-speeding them together in a brilliant collage. Appears random at first; but is not so; very carefully layered and chosen with care to create the effect of a blizzard of overlapping information - some totally abstract, some recognisable but distorted and melted moments of speech or music, and static noise. Chance and serendipity moulded into an intelligent and coherent composition, and of its type one of the best things heard by human ears. Sounded lovely with the Bob James LP (a record beloved of all who hear it); even nicer here.

Those both date from 1964; an earlier composition, 'The Fox', is from 1957 and Ashley thinks it's his first foray into electronic music. (Quite a 'vulpine / lupine' theme to this CD). In the same way that 'The Wolfman Tape' was carefully prepared to match what the vocal part should be doing in that performance, 'The Fox' carefully matches the electronic sound composition to its vocal component. The music, first, was made of tapes of piano clusters, treated into unrecognisability and edited into a scattershot electronic composition. On top of this, Ashley recorded a languid half-sung vocal in eerie tones, taking verses from an old Burl Ives folk song as starting point. In true minimalist fashion, the selection of the text is not random, and Ashley wants to call attention to the underlying theme of this song, in which the sly fox - a chicken thief - comes out a winner and gloats as he feeds his family. Ashley tweaked the verses slightly to make this pessimistic theme ('crime pays') even darker. A vaguely troubling work, which an imaginative listener could read as a precursor to the memorably freakish performance by Patti Waters derived from another traditional source, 'Black is the colour'.

For those taken with this eerie side to Ashley's singular nature, I can direct you straight to the last cut here, 1960's 'The Bottleman'. A long (43 minute) tape composition, it was prepared for an artist's film and existed in two versions - of which this is the full-length one. Where 'The Wolfman' is clearly the audience-grabber (and the one you should all use to convince non-believers to join our cause), this quieter piece may have more longevity. The indistinct rumbling and rolling tones are utterly enchanting; the listener is astonished as to why something so inert could become so haunting, expressive and even dream-like. Ashley realised it through characteristically simple methods; contact microphones placed near loudspeakers standing 6 feet away. The loudspeakers were playing an 'open-circuit hum' of 60 hz. This was mixed with voice sounds and other recordings, occasionally vari-speeded. A similar melding method as used in 'The Wolfman', but with a totally different effect. This is not a simplistic 'drone' effect, but a detailed and carefully realised composition, bravely using unpromising elements that most composers would never have even dreamed of using, let alone manage to turn them into such gorgeous sound art.

A stunning collection, richly illuminated by the benign Ashley's precise and detailed sleeve notes, even including a complete instructional score for how to perform 'The Wolfman'. Nobody should be without a copy.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

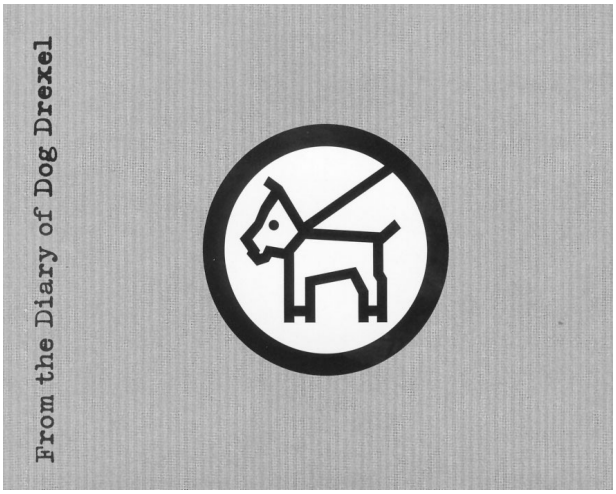
Emanuele Carcano, via Frapolli 40, 20133 Milan, Italy
algamarghen@iol.it

Scott Fields Ensemble

From the Diary of Dog Drexel

ITALY ROSSBIN RS008 CD (2002)

Scott Fields is an American composer and guitarist who arrives with his background in the Chicago free jazz scene of the 1960s and 1970s. After a 'pause in his creative endeavours', in the early 1990s he resumed musical activities finding a way back into the over-crowded scene via improvised music. Here, he delivers a set of excellent and innovative compositions using the talents of a small chamber group of players, all equipped with acoustic instruments, drawn from a mixture of jazz, improv and new music fields - international star Carrie Biolo on vibes, marimba and percussion, experimenter Kyle Bruckmann on oboe and English horn, Buillermo Gregorio on alto sax and clarinet, and improviser Greg Kelley on trumpet. Also a conceptual LP, intended to depict a day in the life of Dog Drexel, five movements designed to 'programmatically portray an emotional state from the



diary'. The first long track 'Conflicted' shows the composer laying out his wares - a limpid beauty is plainly evident from the opening minutes alone, and it's sustained for this whole CD. A series of near-perfect consonances and coincidences, slowly unfolding, which result from these talented and intelligent musicians carefully exploring the terrain mapped out by Fields' compositions. An extremely attractive set of sounds results, bracketed in a kind of virtual matrix, within which the sonorities of every individual instrument are perfectly audible and clearly outlined in the arrangements and the mix - without any of the restless scratchiness of jumpy improvised music, nor the harsh dissonances of some extreme modern composition, this altruistic approach is bound to find favour even with hard-bitten opponents of modernism. 'It can be difficult to distinguish preplanned from spontaneous,' claims press note, describing the compositional strategy and its use of extended techniques. 'Best plan for listening to this music is to treat it as a whole rather than worry about what came from where'. Think of a slightly more affable version of The Mothers of Invention circa Uncle Meat period; Simon H Fell, who has successfully mixed composition with conducted improv, is another who would probably approve of this approach to music making.

Onwards to second track 'Pissed' for a faster version of the ensemble's characteristic style, and some very precise stop-start dynamics are in evidence showing the combo can perform their rehearsed phrases - some of which are so much in the American idiom as to appear slightly comical - with dead-on timing, taking cue from excellent conductor Stephen Dembski. Carl Stalling (the composer for Bugs Bunny cartoons) would probably have chuckled at this particular arrangement and loved the comedic moments in Kelley's playing here. Third track is entitled 'Bummed'. It's a more spacey and droney affair whose sound-picture is VERY upfront - ie it pretty much sticks our heads right inside the bells of the woodwind instruments, while the percussion is more like abstract expressionism - it paints faint purple clouds in the background. The fourth movement 'Agitated' completes this suite with more of these same tight compositions, while the fifth - 'Medicated' - utilises a totally different compositional approach by another composer. This particular package is constructed inside a computer by Gregory Taylor, taking as his source material solo improvisations by the ensemble players. If I hadn't read this was the case, I might almost not have known, as his processing has a commendable lightness of touch so as to be almost indiscernible. 'Medicated' glows with a resonating, shimmering elegance, like a huge blue velvet curtain slowly pulled across a gigantic stage in a 19th-century theatre house. Individual playing styles - such as one reed player tonguing his instrument in a characteristic staccato attack - are diffused within a carefully-layered pool of constantly-shifting sounds and elements, seamlessly blended via software. So there you have it - a day in the life of Dog Drexel, rendered with clarity and conviction by a splendid group of committed talents.

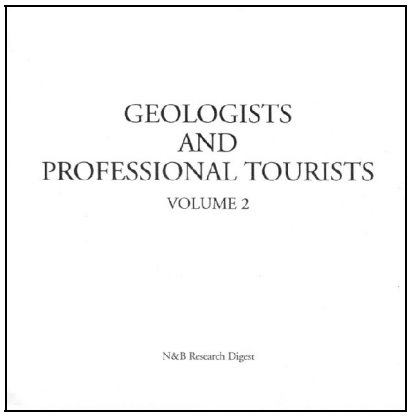
ED PINSENT 10-2003

Via Gozzano 1, 10098 Rivoil (TO), Italy
rossbin@libero.it
www.rossbin.com

Various Artists

Geologists and Professional Tourists Volume 2

RUSSIA / FINLAND N&B RESEARCH DIGEST NBRD-06 CD (2003)



The forces at work behind the austerely named N & B Research Digest label are the Russian Alexei Borisov, and the Finn Anton Nikkilä. Borisov has been immersed in the avant-scene for years (his latest solo release Before the Evroremont reviewed in these very pages last issue), and is one of the pioneers of modern Russian electronic music. This is the second volume of the 'Geologists and Professional Tourists' series, the first being the label's first release back in 2000. The title of this CD is an apt one, this treasure trove of pieces very like a geologist's sample of strange rocks bought back from some dark hinterland for further inspection and classification. What these tracks have in common is a broadly dirty, surreal sound that you imagine being filtered through the large rusting hulks of soviet tube technology, all levers and big clunky dials.

Fittingly Borisov and Nikkilä have three tracks together here: two live tracks ('Quiet Loud' and 'Moskowrytm') and the winning 'So few good moustaches', featuring Borisov's invented-language recital accompanied by bursts of fuzzy guitar and electronic bleeps and hums. Lyrical gangsta indeed. Borisov is also here in collaboration with the Japanese noise-merchant K.K.Null, where there are drum machines and feedback at work, and as part of F.R.U.I.T.S. with Pavel Jagen.

Apparently The Wire has said that '...the more you hear of K.K.Null, the less you know'. I guess it's impressively cryptic statements such as this that keep them in business, all of this based on Null's reluctance to verbalise his music. He does get around the truth be told, but both his collaboration with Borisov and his solo effort here 'Assassin from Outer Space' reveal common denominators. Both have a cold pulse of steel running through their veins, with electronic noise flitting round the edges. Null's assassin would indeed be a thing to be reckoned with, an unstoppable killing machine that would make the Daleks look like a bunch of amateurs playing dress-up.

In an album crammed full of good names, my own etymological prize goes to the Membranoids with their track, ingeniously entitled 'Uj!' Taken from their 2000 CD-R release Drunken Alien (quite a lot of space imagery here) they describe their sound variously as 'thrombo-beat' or 'pneumo-step'. Whatever they do I like it. Think of a pseudo-techno on ketamine and your more than half way there.

The Pink Twins are a pair of laptop (did I say that word?) improvisers from Helsinki, who become triplets on occasions with the addition of a guitarist. The again wonderfully entitled 'Fistful of Fingers' is a playful piece, starting out all cutesy with baby giggles, only to transform into a dirty rocking beast as baby grows up into an obnoxious teenager, then turning all romantic piano, obviously a sign of the protagonist reaching mid-life crisis. It's this form no doubt that saw them recently play SONAR along with Borisov. Just what the Catalans made of all these strange noises from large, cold countries is a matter of speculation.

Many more gems are here waiting to be discovered: tracks from Benzo, a Jungian psychotherapist by day who did a couple of albums for Leo back in the mid-nineties; Swedish sound artist Leif Elggren's sonic protest art 'The Cobblestone is the Weapon of the Proletariat' (!); Belgian Anton Aeki with a track using field recordings from the local nuclear testing range's military dump; and pieces by Critikal, Russian outsiders Technical Acoustics Lab, Theodore Bastard, and more Jap-noise from Government Alpha. One of the nice things is that everybody gets in and out quite quickly: the longest tracks here are about six or seven minutes, the shortest clocking in around two and this helps contribute to the all-round egalitarian feel. It's all decidedly low-key stuff; nobody makes any sort of grand statement, but just gets on with getting on. Maybe it's all those bleak, cold days in isolation that lends much of the material here an air of detachment. Many of the artists involved seem to be busy creating self-sustaining worlds of sound, almost hermetically sealed against outside intrusion.

AARON ROBERTSON

Hiekkalaiturinraitti 12 A 9, 00980 Helsinki, Finland
mail@nbresearchdigest.com
www.nbresearchdigest.com

Jorge Antunes

Savage Songs: Early Brazilian Electronic Music

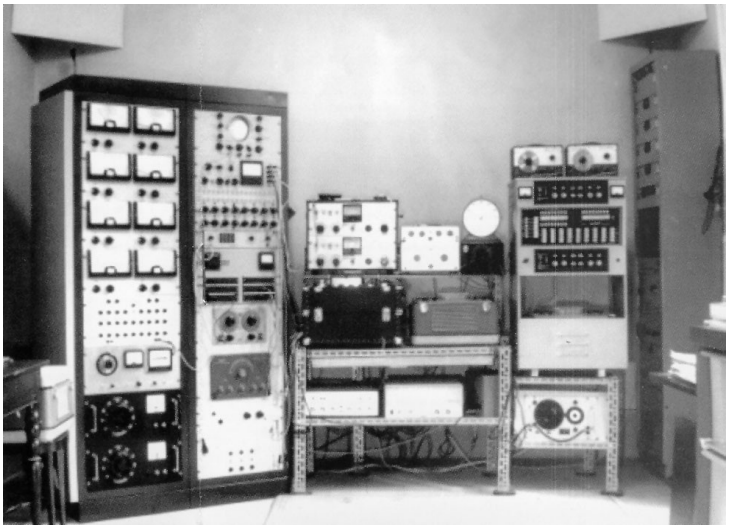
USA POGUS PRODUCTIONS POGUS P21027-2 CD (2002)

Lovely electronic music from a fine vintage, 1960s and early 1970s Brazil. It has to be said, without being patronising, but this work demonstrate a very direct, unrestrained and near-primitive approach to electro-acoustic music. This reflects the mainly untutored (but far from ignorant) background of its creator, avant-pioneer and physics major Jorge Antunes, who produced this work in his youth, on home-made equipment, and little more than a boundless sense of adventure to keep him going. A dessicated European composer could never be so bold! (Which isn't to say you should take out your Koenig and Stockhausen records and burn them immediately; a far better course of action would be to send to me at the editorial address). There's a painterly feel to these sounds, very bright colours, which is entirely fitting given his theory about colour-sound correspondence; and the effect of thick impasto layers, as though he were painting directly onto a rough canvas with noises from his tubes of electronic oil paint. Wild whoops, rich barks, sonorous echoes and sensuous sumptuous globbets of sound are the order of the day. The short cuts (index points 1-12 on this CD) are the most exciting and immediate - almost like punk rock electronic music - but the two long epic pieces at the end, some 15 minutes apiece, are 'narrative' odysseys divided into little episodes, and no less rewarding.

Antunes is regarded as one of the pioneers of electronic music in Brazil. He kicked off his interest in electronic music in 1961, aged just 19. He'd seen the first-ever concert of this new music to be performed in Brazil, and the experience clearly blew his mind. The young violin student went back to his home in Rio de Janeiro, and built himself a basic electro-acoustic kit - 2 tape recorders, and a home-made wave generator. A part-time radio technician, Antunes was a popular figure in the neighbourhood repairing radios for the local friends, and was able to turn his skills to work with oscilloscopes and building the circuit he needed for his saw-tooth wave generator. From this beginning came his first published statement, 'Short Piece for E Natural and Harmonics'. Lacking even basic tape cutting facilities, he assembled this bold work using only the stop, record and pause controls on his tape recorders. He also exhibited the untutored, free improvisational use of his electronic wave device, exploring for himself the wild sounds he could unleash. Both these direct, hands-on approaches would be hallmarks of his work for as long as he remained in his simple home studio.

Next year he produced 'Sideral Waltz', in the process discovering the use of the tape-loop for himself. He thought he had invented the idea until he found it had been used in Paris since the 1950s. On 'Music for Frequency Sweepings', he made early use of sampling, using a track from a found LP of sound effects. The track was 'the sound of a flying saucer'. A lot of composers even then would never have lowered themselves to use sampling in that way, let alone from so 'popularist' a source. For Antunes, it works a treat. 1967 sees the issue of 'Savage Song', one of his strongest works, with lots of live percussion played by Antunes (on cardboard boxes and plastic containers) and designed to invoke a spirit of primitivism. By now he was installed in the Villa-Lobos Institute, but this relative security for his work didn't last too long. Late in 1968, a military dictatorship had taken over in Brazil and - clearly feeling threatened by the ideas of freedom represented by modern music - passed laws to 'dismantle' that Institute, throwing Antunes and other artists out to fend for themselves. He had re-established himself in Buenos Aires by 1970, but even so it shows how precarious is the life that dedicates itself to the pursuit of marginal music.

In 1962 Antunes had founded the Chromo-Music Research Studio, so that he could pursue one of his more unlikely theories - he believed that there was a provable scientific correspondence between colours and sound. I think he managed to gain some recognition in scientific circles for this. By 1965 he had a work 'Contrapunctus contra Contrapunctus' published on the very first electroacoustic LP issued in Brazil, and was developing these theories. Next year, having completed his degree in physics, he published the three 'Chromophonic Studies' that drew connections between colours and



individual notes. These works may be one of the keys to understanding the mind of this singular man; the three studies published here allude to green and red circles, blue and orange spirals and like that, connecting each colour with a specific note in the scale. Judge for yourself how successful they are, but as I say in opening paragraph this man has very 'painterly' qualities to his music that could only be ignored if (a) you have no ears and (b) you never saw an oil painting in your life.

I wish I had space to dwell on the two long tracks at the end, particularly 'Auto-Retrato sobre Paisaje Porteno', which incorporates a scratched-up 78 rpm record playing a tango, along with treatments of the composer's own voice speaking words which apparently make no sense whatsoever, in a bid to align his own personality with that of the Argentinian landscape...but we're out of time. The best thing is to buy a copy and hear for thine self.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

50 Ayr Road, Chester, NY 10918, USA
pogal@pogus.com
www.pogus.com

Piero Grossi

Battimenti

ITALY ANTS AG03 CD (2003)

This one is pretty obscure - a reissue (or perhaps first and only issue) of this ultra-minimal electronic composition by little-known Italian Grossi. It's a real serial piece, executed with a mathematical precision bordering on mania; a machine has been computer-programmed to generate frequency tones at varying pitches, then put them in combinations and permutations according to a formula which I think adds or subtracts the differences from each other, and spits them out as new formulae. This is done to a rule that increases in complexity as it proceeds, so that by the end we get up to five difference sine wave tones combined together. Wowee! I haven't come across such a determinedly mathematical structure to a piece for a long time - the model I usually fall back on is the exponential structure devised by musician and film-maker Tony Conrad for his movie The Flicker.

Pietro Grossi died in 2002, remaining throughout his life something of a pariah even in the rarified arena of avant-composition, but his reputation as an important radical is being reassessed with the help of releases like this one. He composed Battimenti in 1965, after he had given up playing the cello and abandoned any hopes for success in the conventional classical music world. He got into the idea of composition as something utterly simple and totally abstracted away from real life - seeing the process as a series of sequences and groups, derived from the analysis of a very limited number of elements. Naturally enough, he grew attracted to the austerities and purities offered by electronic music, and hung out for some time at the Studio di Fonologica Musicale in Milan. He presumed that mainstream musical composition was completely finished by this point, set up his own studio in 1963 called S 2F M, first at his own home and then later at an academic institution in Florence. Convinced he was onto something 'hot', he actively sent out his electronic experiments to other composers, intending them (with not a little presumption, it must be said) to be used by these other musicians as the basic building blocks for new compositions. From our vantage point, this probably seems every bit as valid as New Order re-using Giorgio Moroder sequencer programmes to make new songs. But things were different in Grossi's day. Needless to say, his radical idea was not seized upon with any alacrity by the classical community, and Grossi was widely ridiculed.

So, how good is this Battimenti? It's good enough - but the sound is my first stumbling block. It is a very limited and totally one-dimensional sound. To call it 'severe' would be an extreme understatement; Pan Sonic are positively baroque in comparison! To listen to these flat bleeping sequences in their entirety is somewhat wearisome and a rather numbing experience. My second reservation is the process concerned, which is so utterly dogged in its pursuit to the end that, again, its limitations soon become apparent. It's like listening to someone determined to count up to one million, in sevens. As soon as you figure out where it's going, you're less inclined to stick around for the ride. Thirdly, as something of a 'Catholic' when it comes to interpreting modern music, I have to note the complete lack of transcendence in this music. Successful minimal music ought to have, in my view, some sort of turning point where it ceases to be monotonous and transforms itself (and the listener) into a new dimension - which may be spiritual, intellectual or even physical. With Battimenti, what you get is what you get - it is what it is, and that's all there is. However, clearly there's an intelligent mind at work here and it would be crass to write him off on the strength of this alone; I'm prepared to accept the importance of Grossi and will investigate other works of his.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Via Filippo de Grenet, 26-00128, Rome, Italy
ants.rec@silenzio-distribuzione.it
www.silenzio-distribuzione.it/ants

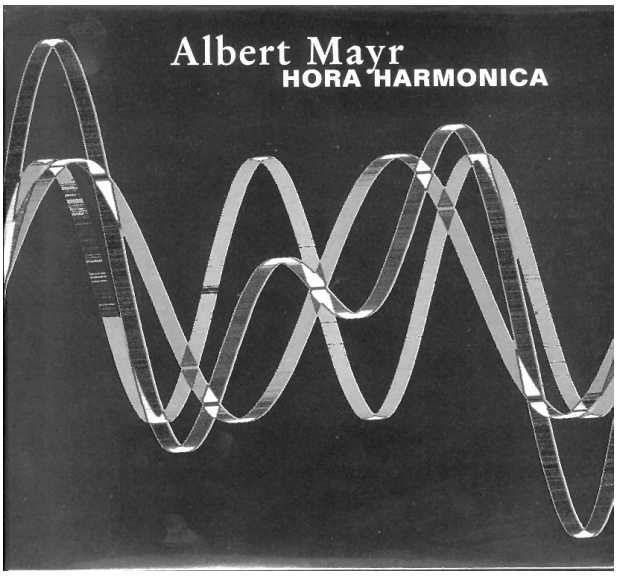
Albert Mayr

Hora Harmonica

ITALY ANTS AG02 CD (2002)

Another release on this Italian label, which put out quite a lot of art music in 2002, mostly by Italian composers who I never heard of, such as Salvatore Linguido, Gigi Masi, Luigi di Giampietro, Francesco Michi and many more. This one is a 1983 composition, realised by Albert Mayr at the University of Padua, using their computer. It's supposed to be some sort of 'musical clock'. Mayr proposes that the human ear measures the passing of time better than any of our other senses. Glancing at a watch is no substitute for using your ears. He mourns the passing of the old acoustic time signals, such as bells, clocks on church towers, or factory sirens. I agree with that, since it says something about the changing face of modern urban communities.

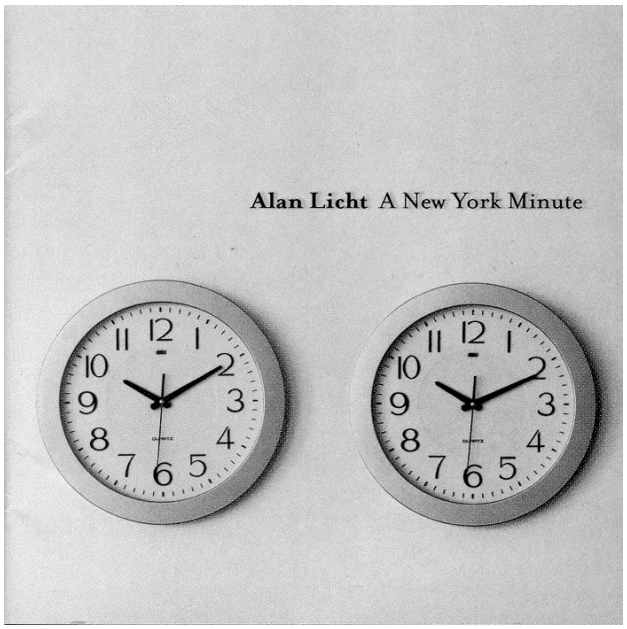
Mayr composed this piece using the 'harmonic series' ordering, a mathematical structuring principle that has ancient origins and probably began with Pythagoras. The harmonic series has normally been applied to musical scales, but here Mayr uses it to divide up parcels of time. Taking sixty minutes as his 'fundamental', he did the maths to produce 12 subdivisions of 60 minutes. These resulting 12 time periods were then matched against a sound which corresponds to an overtone in the audio spectrum.



I like the solid mathematical structure which underpins this work, which does indeed impart a kind of natural authority to the work, which appears to be 'happening' in a very natural way rather than appearing to be composed. However, as a listening experience this is utterly boring. The electronic sound chosen is dull; a sort of inert, chiming, resonating gong, with the same problem of neutrality that besets Grossi's work above. There are also considerable gaps between each sound, which means you're kept waiting ages for the next one, but this of course is the deliberate intention of the composition. Indeed, to sit down and listen to this as a record would be a big mistake. He intends it to be played in a public square, or inside an office full of busy workers. Listening to these chimes as you go about your business will, it is hoped, add 'new cadences' to your activity.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

Via Filippo de Grenet, 26-00128, Rome, Italy
ants.rec@silenzio-distribuzione.it
www.silenzio-distribuzione.it/ants



Alan Licht

A New York Minute

USA XI RECORDS XI 128 2 x CD (2003)

A double CD of music by this famous American man with his guitar playing, and his tape experiments, and other stuff besides. He's both prolific and (some might say) promiscuous in his collaborations and performances since the early 1990s. Some regard this glib writer/musician as something of a phoney; even if they like his writing, they tend to despise his music. There's no denying how informed he is about his country's avant-garde musical heritage. Licht's article on La Monte Young in Forced Exposure was the first any of us (myself included) had ever heard of Young's work. He contributed to Halana magazine also, most notoriously when he published his personal 'top ten' of great minimal records and thereby brought Charlemagne Palestine back into the public eye; followed that up with an interview with Palestine which comprised but a single question from Licht, and a lengthy non-stop reply from the latter. At the same time, Licht allows himself to be openly influenced by these (and many other) American avant composers.

So, is Licht's music any good? Outside of his avant-rock combos (Love Child) and collaborations with the ubiquitous Jim O'Rourke, I never really heard very much of it. I suppose this release is OK. I like the second disc well enough; the first track on it ('14, Second, Fifth') is a long-form solo guitar work, with strumming and droning in equal measures, using chords and tunings in just intonation (or approximation thereof), and arriving at a perfect facsimile of the La Monte Young track that never was, Licht using his steel strings to ape the steel strings on the violas of Conrad and Cale, and maybe even using rosin wheels to get that fine droning effect. At 37 minutes long, this 2000 performance from Phill Niblock's Experimental Intermedia would have made a quite good LP release. The second cut on disc two ' Remington Khan' - also from same time and performance arena - is about the best one here for my money, a pleasing 12-string solo performance delivered in one monotonous key for 38 minutes, and somehow harking back to some assumed historical knowledge of country and psychedelic music. But at least it is genuinely affecting, sincerely played, and (unlike a lot of Licht's music here) not merely clever for its own sake. Gathering in complexity and intensity, Licht jams like a souped-up Henry Flynt character on the 12-string delivering powerful strums, licks and riffs.

Disc One is more of a pain, full of experiments that show the mind of a dilettante, and winds up more overtly pretentious; on the strength of it you'd be hard-pushed to see why anyone makes a fuss about this rather ordinary guy. 'Freaky Friday' is the 19-minute centrepiece, recorded with help from O'Rourke and Aaron Mullan in 2003, and it's a Licht multi-track fest using electric guitars and bass. Starting out determinedly minimal, with a two-note pattern riffing away into oblivion, this workout builds into something as melodic and clever as Steve Howe on a good day, and thus demonstrates that Catholic-taste Licht is 'into' progressive rock as much as he is minimal composition. But it's still rather cold - the droning effects and strumming effects, though pleasant, remain merely that - effects. The player is lost in his world of minimal art, admiring his own brilliance. 'Another Sky' is a throwaway, a chord organ drone from 1997 that's completely pointless; Charlemagne Palestine-lite. 'A New York Minute' the title track, is an absurdist composition built out of radio weather reports, ending with a field recording of passengers at a subway station. Others hear a knowing tribute to John Cage here; I just yawn. 'Muhammed Ali and The Crickets' is about the silliest thing here, with a silly title and a silly pastiche of electro-acoustic music and the early work of Steve Reich. Recordings of crickets chirping, added loops of voices and noise, then a loop of a heavy metal guitar riff. Again, Licht's powerful personality ('look how inclusive I am!') keeps getting in the way of the music. The sleeve notes here by Kenneth Goldsmith and Jutta Koether are filled with unchecked and unqualified enthusiasm for Licht's work, and its value is such that according to Goldsmith you can even play it while working out at the gymnasium and it's still good music. No-one ever wrote that about J S Bach, now did they?

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 1754, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, USA
xirecords@compuserve.com
www.xirecords.org

Warren Burt

Harmonic Colour Fields

USA POGUS PRODUCTIONS P21028-2 CD (2002)

A whole load of 'nice' analogue sounds, using the Roland Sound Canvas synthesizer, wherein Burt plays wonky off-key notes and forms some unusual chord shapes, overlapping abstract sheets of sound, like coloured glass plates floating in space. It all happens VERY slowly. Once the basic pattern is figured out - one slow crescendo after another, folded together to create this overlapping impression - it makes for very dull listening. This is sold to us as 'a set of five computer pieces which explore static microtonal harmonic fields' - so declares composer-performer Burt. In fact this is rather boring, egocentric claptrap. Ignore it and you will sleep better.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

50 Ayr Road, Chester, NY 10918, USA
pogal@pogus.com
www.pogus.com

Gales and Cyclones

Songs, Composition, Mystery Bands and general high weirdness

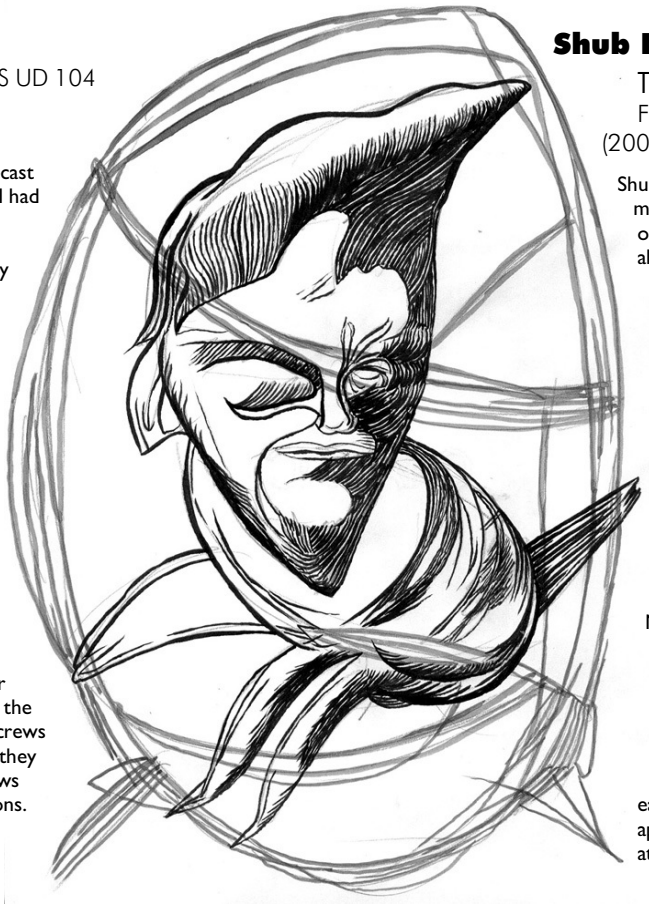
By Richard Rees Jones

Nurse With Wound

Salt Marie Celeste

UNITED KINGDOM UNITED DAIRIES UD 104 CD (2003)

Driving home late one night recently, I was listening to Radio 4 when the shipping forecast came on. This evocative broadcast, which I had not heard for many years, immediately transported me back to the times when I would listen to the radio in bed at night, my insomnia soothed by the reassuring, quintessentially English tones of the BBC announcers. In those days, the nightly reading of the shipping forecast was preceded by an appropriately nautical tune, 'Sailing By', the playing of which acted as an aid to locating the station on the radio dial. The forecast itself sounded, and still sounds, like a strange litany or code. The mysterious names of the shipping regions - Malin Head, Rockall, German Bight - are followed by warnings of gales and cyclones, all numbered to indicate their severity. Intoned with impeccable Establishment gravitas, the shipping forecast outdoes the legendary 'numbers stations' broadcasts for sheer brooding atmosphere. It also recalls the isolated lives of its intended audience, the crews of ocean-going vessels on the high seas, as they huddle around the ship's radio to await news of frequently treacherous weather conditions.



The decline and fall of one such vessel is evoked with glacial power on Salt Marie Celeste. The album is an expansion of an earlier piece, 'Salt', which was included on a limited edition CD released to accompany Steven Stapleton (who, for the uninitiated, is Nurse With Wound) and David Tibet's art exhibition at the Horse Hospital gallery in London. This fully realised, hour-long version is one of NWW's most radically minimalist pieces. It consists largely of a single, looming electronic figure, repeated endlessly like the motion of the waves. This incredibly dark and doom-laden sound is punctuated by regular bursts of eerie effects - first a lonely foghorn, then the breathing and creaking of wood, and finally the constant advance of water. Energised by relentless stereo panning, the piece describes a shipwreck as a giant arc of progression and descent.

There are distinct similarities with Gavin Bryars' epochal The Sinking of the Titanic, although the differences are also clear. Bryars' 70s masterpiece takes as its starting point the poignant testimony of several Titanic survivors that the ship's band continued to play as the ship went down, heroically refusing to abandon their positions and thereby providing the tragedy with a fitting soundtrack. The Titanic itself, meanwhile, was a mass of lively activity in the first days of its doomed maiden voyage, while its sinking was a monument to human folly and hubris. Stapleton's ship cradles no such vitality, and its sinking tells of no heroism or ambition. This music speaks only of darkness, of isolation and of watery death.

RICHARD REES JONES

www.worldserpent.com

Shub Niggurath

Testament

FRANCE MUSEA GA 8665.AR CD (2003)

Shub Niggurath: a mysterious name for a mysterious band, who have come up with oneof the most perversely compelling albums I have heard in a long time. It transpires that they were named after a demon created by the horror writer HP Lovecraft, and were active in France from the mid-80s to the mid-90s. During that time they released two albums, Les Morts Vont Vite in 1986 and C'Etaient de Très Grandes Vents in 1991. They continued to record until the sad death of bassist Alain Ballaud in 1995, and Testament collects those recordings for the first time. Ballaud's death is particularly cruel, since on the evidence provided here Shub Niggurath were a group at the peak of their powers.

The album contains ten untitled tracks, varying in length from two to ten minutes. Despite the three-year period covered by the recordings, they sound very much of a piece with each other. This is key to the album's appeal, which lies in the creation of an atmosphere of bewitching heaviness.

In fact, Testament is the music that the largest black hole in the universe must emanate as it remorselessly devours everything around it. Guitarist Jean-Luc Hervé delivers huge, chordal block riffs that lay the foundation for splintering, angular solos, while the late Ballaud's sub-bass rumbles vie for headspace with Edward Perraud's powerhouse free drumming. It's as if the 70s line-up of King Crimson has been pressed into service as the house band in Hell, with Hervé acting as Fripp to Ballaud's Wetton and Perraud's Bruford. And just as David Cross's weedy violin lines marred some of Crimson's output, so Veronique Verdier's tentative and unnecessary trombone provides the only faltering moments on this album.

There's plenty of assured group improvisation here, loading the core trio's interplay with an exploratory, organic feel. This is especially evident on the first and quietest track, in which spare percussion edges restlessly around subterranean bass throb and eldritch metallic scraping. By the second track the guitar and drums have really kicked in, with great towering structures of fuzz and sustain recalling Ascension or an amped-up AMM.

The pace barely lets up over the rest of the album, as the music becomes ever denser and more ominous. These extended freeform workouts left this listener awestruck, humbled and fighting for breath.

RICHARD REES JONES

Musea, 138 rue des Vallieres, 57070 Metz, France
www.musearecords.com

Hanna Hartman

Färjesånger / Cikoria / Die Schrauben, die die Welt zusammenhalten

SWEDEN ELEKTRON EM1005 CD (2002)

Housed in a gorgeous red fold-out digipak, this CD from Swedish sound artist Hartman comes with little documentation beyond the fact that its three long pieces were all commissioned by European radio stations. These origins lend an insight into Hartman's somewhat opaque methods. Listeners to radio dramas are invited to supply their own pictures to complement the sounds given by the broadcast, which on its own is tantalisingly incomplete. Similarly, Hartman's fractured, multiple sounds strive towards a visualisation that can only be provided by the listener.

Each of the pieces is a collage of found sounds with minimal processing. The title of the opening 'Färjesånger' (Ferry Songs) suggests nautical activity, an impression confirmed by many of the sounds included. We appear to be in some kind of workshop or dockyard, with the clank of metal on metal and the hiss of escaping air ranged against deep, indistinct knocks and rumbles. At the same time, the presence of isolated piano notes and what sounds like fabric being torn signals artistic intervention. The piece bursts into life at around 15 minutes, with a frantic collision of industrial textures worthy of Einstürzende Neubauten.

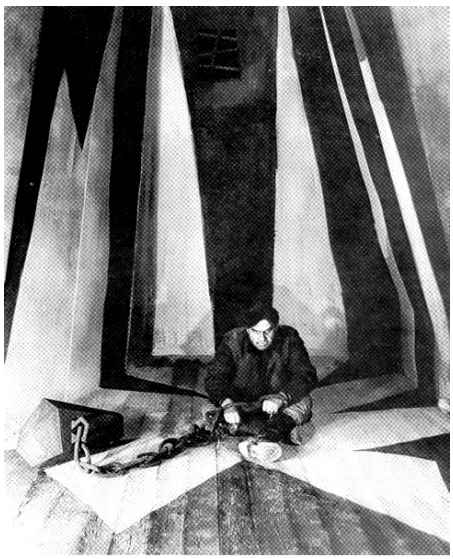
At 20 minutes, 'Färjesånger' just about manages to avoid outstaying its welcome, an achievement not shared by the second track. 'Cikoria' is an aggregation of further clatters, rumbles and rustles, this time deployed in a more programmed manner. Hartman sets up a facile opposition between city and country life, with police sirens, New York subway announcements and the churning of machinery giving way to birdsong and running water. This movement from an urban to a rural/pastoral setting certainly comes as a relief, but is too schematic to have more than a soothing effect. From then on, the piece really loses its way. The subway announcement is needlessly repeated, a sure sign that creativity is flagging, and the rest of the track is taken up with yet more metallic sounds. Things limp on to the 35-minute mark, but by then this listener had long since lost interest.

The final piece, 'Die Schrauben, die die Welt zusammenhalten' (the screws that hold the world together), begins as unpromisingly as its predecessors. As before, we are faced with an array of collaged material that fails, but only just, to engage the attention - this time, organic sounds of wood and bells. Matters improve greatly at around 12 minutes, however, with a slew of rhythmic propulsion that lends the track the irresistible force of a juggernaut.

From then on Hartman demonstrates an intuitive deployment of sounds that is sadly wanting elsewhere, showing some of Nurse With Wound's skill for simultaneously comic and disturbing juxtaposition. A friendly, meandering harmonica solo wanders across the sound stage near the end, capping an uneven and only intermittently enjoyable release.

RICHARD REES JONES

www.elektron.nu



Geoff Smith

The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari

UNITED KINGDOM ANIMATO CD 003 (2001)

Geoff Smith

Salome

UNITED KINGDOM ANIMATO CD 002 (2001)

Geoff Smith is a Brighton-based composer and musician who is one of the world's leading exponents of the hammer dulcimer. This ancient instrument consists of a solid wooden board across which strings are stretched; the player hits the strings with small wooden hammers, producing a lovely, bell-like timbre. In the late 80s and early 90s Smith fronted Attacco Decente, a hard-hitting outfit who made two albums of impassioned, utterly modern folk music. Situated among a battery of equally unusual percussion instruments, and Mark Allen's rich acoustic guitar work, Smith's dulcimer formed the bedrock for devastating, harmony-drenched songs that spoke with equal directness of personal will and political commitment. One of the most sharply innovative and creative bands of their time, Attacco never received anything like the recognition they deserved.

Since Attacco split, Smith has continued to explore the possibilities of the hammer dulcimer, and to make some fairly important discoveries of his own, of which more later. These two discs present the audio side of two recent audio-visual projects.

The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari is Smith's new score to the silent horror film of the same name. Made by the German Robert Wiene in 1919, the film is a classic of cinematic Expressionism. It tells the story of a fairground barker, the eponymous Caligari, who exhibits a sleepwalker that is suspected of murder. The convoluted plot, however, is far less notable than the extraordinary sets and cinematography. The film's crazed rooms and impossible angles all contribute to its vertiginous, nocturnal state.

In early 2003, Smith embarked on a tour of cinemas around the UK, performing the Caligari score live as the film played above him. Smith uses three dulcimers - chromatic, diatonic and his own customised microtonal model. To watch this live, with little twinkling lights illuminating the instruments as Smith played along with the film's unearthly scenes from the darkness, was a transfixing spectacle.

Taken on its own, the score is a challenging but rewarding listen. Corresponding to the six acts of the film, its six movements modulate from slow, deliberate exposition to furious outbursts of virtuoso riffing. Smith uses many of the tropes of the classic horror soundtrack - the spine-tingling descending run, the unresolved minor chords that hint at unease and foreboding - but refuses cliché through the constant ebb and flow of pace and rhythm. A delicate melodic motif is introduced halfway through the first movement and recurs at intervals, lending a conceptual unity to the composition that is bolstered elsewhere by tender, wordless vocals. Smith explores the properties of each dulcimer in turn, with the sonorous tones of the chromatic and diatonic models giving way in the fifth movement to the more exotic, Eastern-influenced sounds made possible by the unique tuning mechanism he has developed for the microtonal model. Throughout the piece, Smith ratchets up the tension with sustained melodic inventiveness, releasing silvery clouds of sound that float ominously around the soundworld and then disperse.

Smith demonstrates a more focused side to his craft on Salome, a collection of five instrumental pieces and two songs. This music was used as the accompaniment to a production of Dance of the Seven Veils by the Japanese dancer Shakti, although the album comes across perfectly well as a piece of work in its own right. Bookending the set are 'Persona' and 'Stream of Consciousness', the only two pieces composed especially for the production; both hammer away at the listener's nerve endings, creating dreamlike moods through insistent repetition. The songs 'Mystery of Innocence' and 'Sweet Love' are affecting, but frustratingly slight compared with the heightened erotic and social charge of Smith's songs for Attacco Decente. The album's twin highlights, 'Child Soldier' and 'Ferocious Tenderness', see Smith unleashing the full power of his astonishing virtuosity on the dulcimer, which is however devoid of unnecessary flourish or show. Instead Smith offers a concentrated and sumptuous formalism, with the teeming chimes of the dulcimer rounding out a succession of exquisitely turned atmospheres.

Smith recently announced a major discovery: a device that applies his patented microtonal tuning mechanism to the piano. This has revolutionary implications for the theory and practice of piano playing. Essentially, it enables the piano's normal equal-tempered tuning to be adjusted at will, opening up the instrument - previously hampered by Western tuning convention - to the microtones situated between the piano's 88 keys. The pianist will then be able to play music based on unusual and Eastern tunings, providing this most tradition-based of instruments with an entirely new soundworld.

RICHARD REES JONES

www.dulcimer.co.uk

The Hafler Trio

Whistling About Chickens

THE NETHERLANDS FIRE INC F10 CD (2002)

I'm asking for trouble by reviewing this. The title may come from the observation that 'writing about music is like whistling about chickens' (although it's never clear who first said this, and I always thought it was 'dancing about architecture' anyway). And this music is particularly difficult to write about. It's deliberately, wilfully obscure; it appears to follow some kind of system or code, the key to which is kept tantalisingly out of reach. And, while frequently striking and beautiful, it's for the most part extremely minimal, requiring great effort and concentration on the part of the listener.

First, some facts. The Hafler Trio are not a trio; they have had other members, but this is essentially the project of one man, Andrew McKenzie. McKenzie has been active in the fields of music and sound art for twenty years, collaborating along the way with many luminaries of the underground. His own body of work as The Hafler Trio has been characterised by a serious, scientific mode of enquiry into the nature and application of acoustic phenomena. Often accompanied by extensive written documentation, and housed in unusual and attractive packaging, The Hafler Trio's releases have always been about more than just the music.

Whistling About Chickens is the first Hafler Trio release for some years, and consists of recordings made between 1995 and 2001. McKenzie's public silence during this time is due to a number of factors, most notably - and sadly - his ongoing battle with hepatitis, and associated struggles with medical treatment and residency status in his adopted country of Iceland (for details, see www.brainwashed.com/h3o). It's a double CD packaged in an outsize wallet, with a text-heavy 24-page booklet.

Disc one, 'The whole hog, including the postage', consists of eleven tracks which vary in length from two to twenty minutes. The prevailing mood is one of stark electronic minimalism, with occasional rhythmic interventions. Several of the pieces begin almost imperceptibly, before introducing activity into the soundfield; but this activity is hardly ever intrusive or aggressive. Instead, phased drone patterns slip and fold into networks of hazy frequencies and layered, undulant feedback. 'One Other Vantage Point' introduces a stepping metallic figure and ends with the jolt of a processed female voice, while 'Restriction of Movement' flits by on a seductive rhythmic pulse and liquid textures reminiscent of classic 70s Tangerine Dream. Best of all is the lengthy - and, relatively speaking, appropriately titled - 'Marvellous Vitality'. A skeletal, attenuated rhythm occupies the last ten minutes of this twenty-minute piece, coiling elegantly around alien sounds and frequencies.

Things get heavier only on 'Illegal Admiration and Contemplation', with its scorching burst of feedback. Frustratingly, however, this gets cut off after only two minutes, when a more sustained period of dissonance would have been welcome. It's a rare lapse of judgement in an otherwise utterly convincing disc.

The second disc, which rejoices in the title 'Arguing with pigs about the quality of oranges', is even more minimal than the first. Supposedly divided into three tracks, there is only one index point, and it's impossible to tell where one track ends and the next begins. The drones and frequencies hover uneasily around bell chimes and long periods of silence.

What the music doesn't quite convey is the sense of playful mischief brought to the enterprise by the packaging and documentation. McKenzie teases us with hints that there is an overall theme or concept to the album, from the references to animals and birds in the titles to the opaque texts printed in the booklet. But The Hafler Trio don't give up their secrets easily, and the sense of mystery endures.

RICHARD REES JONES

www.fire-inc.demon.nl

Spring Heel Jack

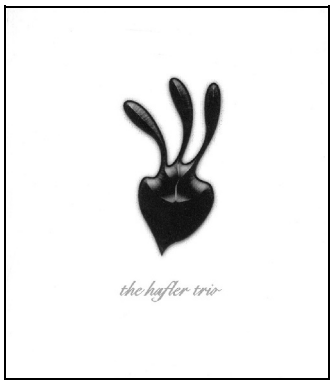
Amassed

USA THIRSTY EAR THI57123.2 CD (2002)

Spring Heel Jack

Live

USA THIRSTY EAR THI57130.2 CD (2003



On these two excellent discs, a live and a studio set, Spring Heel Jack demonstrate how far they have come from their origins as a drum and bass outfit to the mind-melting landscapes of free improvisation. The duo of John Coxon and Ashley Wales have assembled two veritable supergroups of Improv talent, based around the core presence of Evan Parker (saxophone), Matthew Shipp (electric piano) and Han Bennink (drums). More surprising, perhaps, is the presence of Spiritualized's J Spaceman (aka Jason Pierce) on guitar. Yet, like SHJ's own odyssey, Pierce's presence illustrates the ever-increasing cross-fertilisation between musical categories - and his own work with Spiritualized has frequently revelled in a love of free-form atonality.

Amassed is a follow-up to 2001's Masses, SHJ's first large-scale foray into Improv. Whereas the earlier album was largely a collaboration with American free jazz musicians, here the emphasis shifts to the European sphere. Highlights of the eight shortish tracks include 'Wormwood', wherein Coxon's loose guitar and Wales' sublime percussive touches lead to some lovely, jazzy interplay between Shipp and Parker. Characteristically, the piece becomes ever more frenetic as Bennink attacks his drumkit and the guitar and sax take flight. Parker is lyrical and tender on the opening 'Double Cross', his fluttering runs anchored by Bennink and by John Edwards' double bass.

The set is beautifully balanced between full-on group improvisation and more barbed solo and duo explorations. 'Maroc' is an incredible battle between Parker and Spaceman, with Pierce sending out splintering shards of guitar and feedback while Parker lets rip with a stunning circular breathing solo. Equally intense is the appropriately titled 'Duel', an epic confrontation between Parker and Bennink.

Elsewhere, Kenny Wheeler delivers some achingly beautiful flugelhorn on 'Lit', although this piece is marred by the album's only wrong note, as Wales bafflingly tears and crumples paper. All is forgiven by the time of the closing 'Obscured', however, which sees a mesmeric rhythmic pulse coil ominously around Shipp's tumbling piano, as the rest of the ensemble work up a collective firestorm around him.

The live set was recorded in Brighton, at a show I was lucky enough to have attended (and don't you just love it when live albums appear of concerts you were at?). Like the studio disc, it teems with instrumental virtuosity and wild ensemble playing. The line-up combines the American feel of Masses with the European sensibility of Amassed, with William Parker replacing Edwards on bass; but there is no respite from the thrilling intensity with which the group invests every phrase and passage. Over the course of two long improvisations, SHJ and their fine collaborators modulate from smoky lyricism to swinging bop and exhilarating, oceanic energy.

RICHARD REES JONES

www.thirstyear.com

Viv Corringham and Rick Wilson

Glimpses of Recognition

UNITED KINGDOM THIRD FORCE TFCD 002 CD (2002)

This is a fine album of songs by a formidable combination of singer and instrumentalist. The songs are long, spare and enigmatic, but they never cease to engage the listener with dynamic shifts of mood and texture. Corringham is a gifted mezzo-soprano whose ability to inhabit the landscape of the song recalls the great Diamanda Galas. Her extended vocal range allows her to stamp her authority on each of the eight tracks, delivering their allusive texts in ways that are constantly challenging and surprising.

Corringham is accompanied by Rick Wilson on drums, keyboards and electronics, and on three tracks by Anne Wood on violin. Wilson's drumming is always inventive, whether he is powering the song with a steady rhythm or adding colour through his arsenal of percussive effects. Wood's violin hovers and descends with unerring accuracy, deftly occupying the spaces left by the percussion and voice.

The architecture of this music is subtle and persuasive. A song like 'Laid Bare' begins quietly, searchingly, with Corringham's becalmed yet

authoritative voice underpinned by tinkling bells and spooky electronic textures. Wilson ups the urgency almost imperceptibly with busy, confident drumming, before the vocals return to round things off. The album is full of such pleasing attention to detail. Corringham's voice is so strong that she can sing lines like 'we are all participants in eternity' ('That Moment') and make them sound eloquent and necessary, rather than empty and pretentious. That strength combines beautifully with Wilson's vibrant instrumentation, affording the listener far more than mere glimpses of recognition.

RICHARD REES JONES

29 Gleneldon Road, London SW16 2AX, UK

Whitehouse

Bird Seed

UNITED KINGDOM SUSAN LAWLY SLCD025 CD (2003)

In early 2003 Whitehouse, now down to the core duo of William Bennett and Philip Best, played a weekend of concerts in London to celebrate the release of this new album. At the Conway Hall in Red Lion Square - a long-time rallying point for the angry and the dispossessed - the two men marked out new territory for the band by playing nothing but material from this album. It was as if the departure of Peter Sotos - an American noted for his unsparing documentation of child abuse, kiddie porn and sexual sadism - had spurred Whitehouse to rid themselves of their more bluntly transgressive elements and move towards a more forensic, but no less arresting, form of enquiry. For there has long been an element of investigation in Whitehouse's art - a sense that, however deeply felt and personally expressed, it has also been aimed at provocation, at goading the listener into a response and measuring the nature of that response. Hence, perhaps, the lengthy recording of fans' reactions to each new release on the Whitehouse website.

Such reaction so far to Bird Seed has been decidedly mixed, no doubt in part because it represents a distinct move away from the bludgeoning force of the earlier records with which Whitehouse cemented their fearsome reputation. I was, regrettably, too young to be aware of their now impossibly rare 80s albums (including the notorious Right To Kill, of which only 300 copies were made and which, alone among Whitehouse albums, has never been reissued due to Bennett's admirable insistence that it be allowed to retain its clandestine quality), but I lapped up the CD reissues and each new album up to and including 1992' s blistering Never Forget Death. They dropped off my radar for the rest of the 90s, but on the evidence of Bird Seed they have not lost any of their creative energy since that time.

The first thing you notice about Bird Seed, from the cover inwards, is how many words there are on it. They flow unchecked like a particularly noxious river, haranguing a nameless 'you' with a dense and unforgiving blend of vitriolic abuse, virulent symbolism and jarring metaphoric imagery. Targets for the abuse may or may not include the tabloid press ('Why You Never Became A Dancer'), victims of self-harm ('Cut Hands Has The Solution') and even Stuart Lubbock, the unfortunate party guest who drowned in Michael Barrymore's swimming pool ('Wriggle Like A Fucking Eel'). The words of these three long tracks are spat out by Bennett with demented hysteria, or by the workaday and less compelling voice of Best. Whereas the old Whitehouse would punctuate their assault of noise and feedback with well chosen blasts of verbal obscenity, the new sound is driven by the vocals, around which the music swirls in a barrage of uncanny, pulsating rhythms.

The albums's three other pieces take different approaches. The title track 'Bird Seed' is Sotos' farewell to Whitehouse, a harrowing 15-minute collage of spoken word testimonies from rape victims, prostitutes and sexually abused girls. It's deliberately, calculatedly unpleasant, but not without moments of black humour, as in the following exchange:

Interviewer: 'Do you use condoms?'

Woman: 'Oh my God yes, I've got them right now, I don't want no Aids, I'm clean.'

Interviewer: 'How many months are you pregnant?'

Woman: 'Seven...'

Those who would like to hear more of this kind of thing would do well to seek out Sotos' Buyer's Market CD, which contains an album length's worth of the stuff. Others will probably not wish to sit through this more than once.

The closing track 'Munkisi Munkondi' is an intriguing accretion of lurching, queasy rhythms. Best of all, though, is the chilling 'Philosophy'. Bennett is restrained, almost conversational, as he lays bare the contents of a mind riven with aggression and confusion: 'A terrible thing happened / My friend was stabbed in the street by some drunk / Dead before he arrived at the hospital / Wouldn't it be horrible? / Think about it / Even if you could get that door opened / And you were to search / You would never find me again...'

The softly spoken vocals just about maintain their presence against a complex layering of drones and feedback. The song burns with wounded regret and is the remarkable centrepiece of an album that sees Whitehouse effortlessly reinventing themselves as noise terrorists for the 21st century.

RICHARD REES JONES

www.susanlawly.com

Angels of Light

Everything Is Good Here/Please Come Home

USA YOUNG GOD YG22 CD (2003)

Michael Gira's Angels of Light return with another collection of blasted folk-blues laments, at once as ancient as the Bible and as modern as tomorrow. After the first, hesitant steps of the debut Angels album, New Mother (1999) and the rapturous intensity of its follow-up How I Loved You (2001), this third album sounds both like and unlike its predecessors. There is the same careful, layered approach to the dynamics of songform, the same painterly use of a variety of acoustic instruments, and the same rich baritone voice singing lyrics shot through with convulsive, passionate imagery. What is new is a certain concision and a less self-consciously epic tone. The ambiguous, hesitantly reassuring message of the title points to absence and longing - an impression reinforced by the cover art, which foregoes Gira's usual use of resonant symbols and icons in favour of stark photographs of bare domestic interiors.

The songs reflect this impression of acute emptiness. 'Palisades' maps the traces left by a death, or a disappearance; its melancholy vocals and dreamlike percussion are fatally undercut by the closing lines: 'Reasons won't come, and no-one will regret...that you're gone'. The gentle, soft-focus eroticism of 'Kosinsky' similarly turns on a knife edge, with the 'blonde hair that's a river of translucent, liquid light' revealed at the end to belong to one who also has 'the eyes of an animal'.

The album is full of such striking lyrical observations, but it is Gira's remarkable voice that animates them, a thing of great beauty, tenderness and rage. Like the great English vocalist Peter Hammill, Gira shapes his songs through compelling shifts of vocal register, allowing the music to live and breathe around the voice. At times, the results are as noisy and driven as anything by Gira's former band Swans. 'All Souls' Rising' sounds like an Old Testament prophet celebrating the end of the world: 'Leave the righteous ones to rise again and drink the light from enemies'. The song is powered by urgent riffing, foot-stomping tension and blasts of coruscating harmonica. The band barely pause for breath before launching into the ferocious 'Nations', in which Gira delivers an unusually biting socio-political tirade on behalf of the poor and destitute.

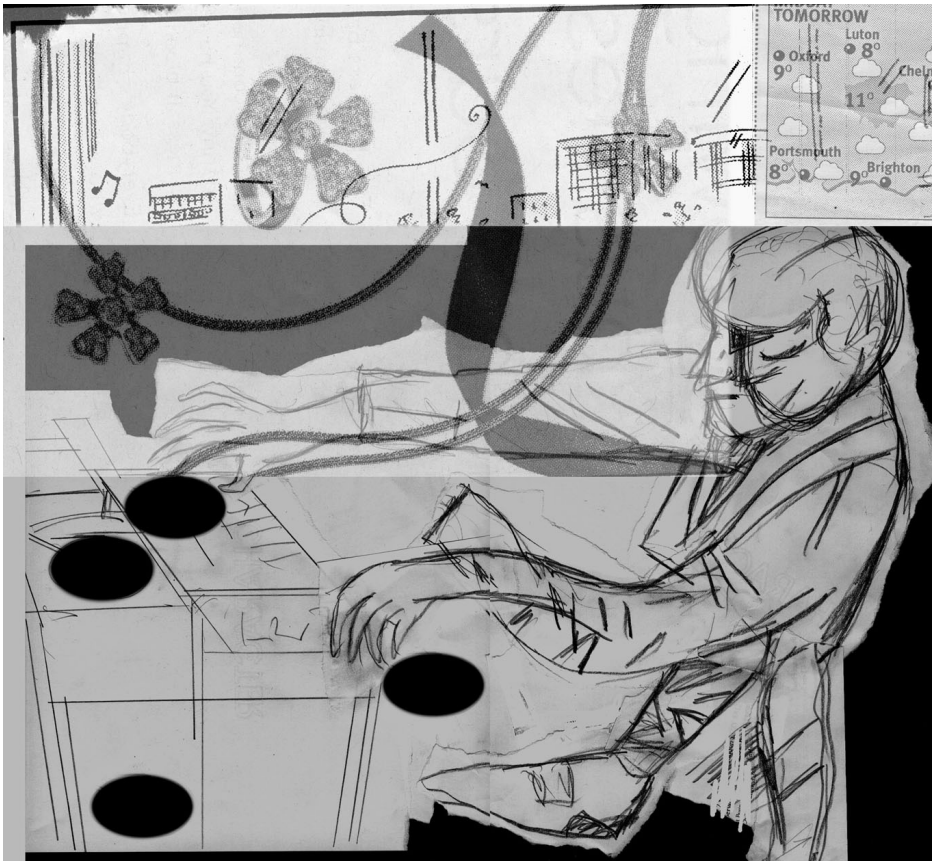
The Angels enrich the sonic palette with inspired touches of piano, violin, flute and pedal steel guitar. These transform songs like 'The Family God' and 'What You Were', both of which begin slowly and deliberately before opening out into wide, blissful panoramas. Between the two sits the hectic 'Rose of Los Angeles', an incantatory portrait of an old woman close to death that exposes the subject's frailty while expressing anger at the powerlessness of her condition.

The Angels of Light transfix the listener by giving expression to the pulsating, symbolic energy they perceive to be at the heart of existence. But there is a tragic, darkly Romantic impulse to their creations that keeps the work oscillating between joy and despair. Gira plants one final twist at the end of the swinging, hypnotic 'Sunset Park'. The song repeats the words 'She brings some, she'll bring some, she brings one, she'll bring one' over and over, keeping the listener wondering what she will bring, until in the last seconds the answer comes with a quietly spoken, almost throwaway 'Love'. It's a touching, generous moment; and yet, as the rest of the album reminds us, love may be all you need, but it certainly isn't all that there is.

RICHARD REES JONES

www.younggodrecords.com

PHILIP JECK



IT'S A PLEASURE TO PRESENT THIS INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP JECK, WHOSE WORK HAS enchanted and amazed me ever since I first heard a track on the 1998 Touch compilation Teleform and the full-length solo CD Surf that same year, I've been mightily impressed by the economy of means in his offbeat approach to turntabling (he uses lots of old record players) and the layered, complex power he achieves simply by combining several old records playing at once. Noted in issue six 'his skill for handling records, and milking them for hidden meanings, comes over so strongly that you can almost share the joy of handling these tactile, vinyl artefacts along with the creator.' As he confirms in his own words below, 'I want it to be like that sound when I first started buying records...[when] you put that needle onto it and then that first - cssshh! - magical sound that comes out of it and I still love that and I feel those moments when I'm playing - wow, what an amazing sound that is!'

Releasing cartloads of CDs is not really Jeck's agenda, as he's more about live performance - it was through live performance that, over years, he tested his ideas and developed personal ways to make his turntabling work. One pivotal turning point - described vividly by Jeck in interview below - was the major installation work, Vinyl Requiem, a multi-media sound and vision epic which he staged with filmmaker Lol Sargent. No doubt that he can transcend his materials; it's not simply old records spinning on dansettes, but a genuinely moving and worthwhile work.

I think it's fair to say now that Jeck has - after years of persistence, imagination and practice - become a big success. He has made his approach to music work as a viable form, letting it grow organically from his starting point as a DJ and a hobby, testing it out on the road and not simply appearing out of nowhere with some flashy new 'gimmick'. He has become a big name on the avant concert circuit - he currently manages 20 festivals a year - and can earn a living from what he's doing. More to the point, he's now recognised internationally as a true original and innovator - as is borne out by the fact that many younger musicians around now point to Jeck as the reason they started in the first place. He has certainly earned the right to be mentioned in same breath as Christian Marclay - who ironically was one of Jeck's heroes. I spoke to Jeck after he'd performed at the Dundee music festival Kill Your Timid Notion in October 2003 - see elsewhere for lengthy review of entire event.

Date: 19 October 2003
Place: The Mercantile Arms, Commercial Street, Dundee
EP = Ed Pinsent
PJ = Philip Jeck

EP So, how did you get asked to this festival, first of all?

PJ Barry Esson, who's curating it, he asked me. I did a thing for him before, Instal, last year, in the Arches in Glasgow. It went down pretty well, what I did. I think he knew even then that he'd be doing something here in Dundee, so if I was interested...it was going to be earlier in the year originally and then the dates got moved. Anyway, it was Barry that asked me.

EP How many festivals can you do in a year?

PJ Probably about 20 I suppose. I'm going to two more this week! I'm going to the Vancouver New Music Festival and the Send and Receive Festival in Winnipeg. I'm playing one day in Vancouver then the next day in Winnipeg, and the day after in Toronto, so...I'm playing four days in a row. I've not done that before.

EP Has this come about quite suddenly? Have you suddenly become...it sounds like you're on the circuit now.

PJ Yes, I suppose it happened about three years ago, that I suddenly started getting quite a lot of work. It's funny how, because I've been working quite a long time. I've always got work, but suddenly, say about 3-4 years ago, it's just really blossomed, suddenly got lots and lots of work. And earlier in this year, I think in a period of 8 weeks, I went away somewhere abroad to a festival, like every week for 8 consecutive weeks, really was amazing!

EP Must be exhausting.

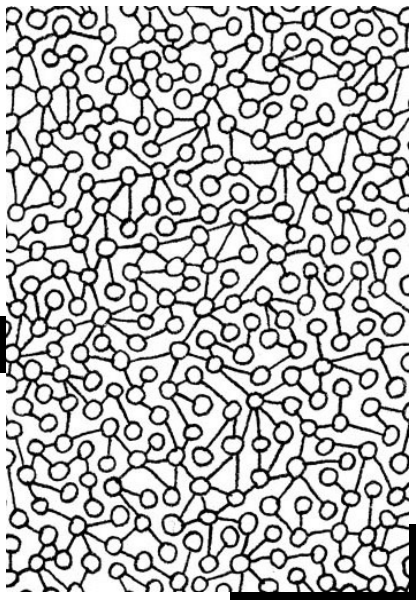
PJ Yes, it is really. I don't really enjoy the travelling. I love it when I'm playing, but I'm not a great fan of all the sitting around in airports and all that. But I'm not knocking it, I'm absolutely chuffed to get invited to play! It's what I want to do, it's what I like doing. It's fantastic - I get paid for doing what I like doing. I don't have to remind myself, it's always feel it's quite a privilege to make a living out of what was [originally] a hobby in way. Fantastic!

EP So you can make a living now, you don't have to...

PJ I wouldn't say it's a fantastic living. I'm in the fortunate position in that my partner, she has a proper job and gets a proper salary, so there's always at least one proper salary coming into the house.

EP So, you say what you do started as a hobby, is that right?

PJ Yes, 'cause my original training and background was in visual art. But I got into music. I'd always been an absolute fan of music since I was a kid, collecting records and that. But I started the early 80s just DJ-ing, when I heard the first scratch and mixing music from the States, that's what I did. Went out and bought a second turntable and a little mixer, and started out by copying people that I liked.



EP Do you mean Steinski and people like that?

PJ Well, not so much the hip-hop area...more people like Larry Levan, Walter Gibbons, they would mix records and extend the break, more like extended linking things rather than the faster cut-up material. I liked that. I did see Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five when they first came to Britain in about 1981, and that was fantastic, that was also very inspiring.

EP I never knew what an extended break was until I saw that history of hip-hop on Channel Four...they explained it was just the instrumental part of a record.

PJ That's right, you've got two copies of the same record, the break...you can just make it last forever, or with the pitch control. Usually, those disco records from that time, would usually have some really good percussion break in there as well. So it's really up, and that's the part of the record that people really like dancing to. So you get rid of all the silly song, and just cut to the chase, that's what it was!

EP So you were doing similar work to that?

PJ When I was in London, yes. I lived in London from 1978 to 1988. I went to art college in Dartington, in Devon. I left college in 1974, and I did a lot of jobs in between. I worked for a roofing company for three years, I worked for the civil service, I worked for HMSO in Holborn. I worked for a shopfitters, all sorts of jobs. I was still doing things around the side, going to all the music events...I think it was the people I met that really shifted me. I got to meet some of the people that were around the London Musicians Collective at the time. So I knew Paul Burwell and Clive Bell and people like that. These were people I met and I saw their work. I used to go to events at LMC. And then started to play with some of these people on occasion. So again, what I did sort of shifted. I was still doing the DJ-ing for the disco, but I got bored of it after a while. I mean it was fantastic, but I wanted to do something else. And where I wanted to go with the sounds, people were not interested in dancing to. The whole point of playing in a club or a party is to get people to dance, and I lost interest in that. I'm not putting it down, I'm not saying it's not good, but it wasn't me...so in some way I found there were other outlets for me. And that was through the LMC. And then also meeting up with dancers in London. My partner Mary, she's a dancer, and so through her - she helped run a studio by Tower Bridge called X6, which was for experimental dance. And there were quite a few ties between some of the people there and some of the LMC people, and also there were a lot of artists based around there too, which I got to know. This was the late 70s. That was around Butler's Wharf. We left there by the early 80s, because it was being bought up, about to have a big makeover, very posh. But before that it was just the cheapest place for artists to have studios and living space.

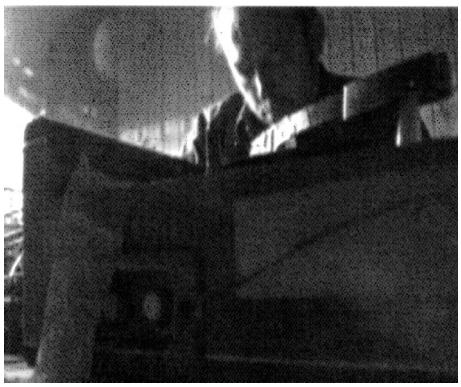
EP I've gotten the impression the LMC was slightly more interesting then than it is now. It's a bit more enclosed now. There was even a connection with the London Film-makers Co-op...

PJ That's right, they were right next door to each other in Camden. Yes, it was great - I saw a lot of really fantastic things there...and terrible things. But it was really open to all sorts of activity. Almost anything could happen, and I liked that.

EP I guess that's what being genuinely experimental is about, when it's a lot more open-ended you don't know where the work is going to end up. I think a lot of what passes now for so-called experimental music is predictable...the people doing it know where it's going to end up in advance, like it's all been pre–planned.

PJ I agree.

EP It's presented as though it's somehow challenging or difficult, when it isn't. So much of it seems very safe to me.



PJ Yes, I think maybe so. I think that in what I do, I really like that I don't quite know what's going to happen. Like the show last night...other than how I was going to start, I had no idea really what I was going to do from then on. I just knew I was going to play for 40 minutes, that's all. That's how long the video lasts. That was my only [guide], I'll play for 40 minutes and now stop - and literally, just stop, wherever I was. Just about every performance I do, I'm not really sure what I'm going to do.

EP So meeting people like Paul Burwell and Clive Bell in London, did they influence you at all?

PJ In the sense of seeing them play...I mean, Max Eastley as well, seeing their work. Yes, it was an inspiration to me, because I hadn't really been that exposed to that area of music. I think the only thing that I owned on record from that world was AMM, their first record, the one on Elektra, I had that because I was a fan of Elektra when I was at school, so I pretty well bought everything that came out on the Elektra label. And when I got that, it was like...what the hell's this crap?! But over time I realised it was really quite good. But at the time, when I first bought it I probably never even played it for another couple of years! [But later I found]...this is quite interesting.

EP It was amazing to find a major label taking a chance on a release like that. It's a collector's item now of course.

PJ Yeah, it's worth a fortune. I know that AMM re-released it themselves. I remember talking to Eddie Prevost about it at a festival somewhere. He said Elektra had either lost the master tape, or wouldn't let them have it. So I think they mastered it from a vinyl copy.

EP So to recap...there you are...you've been a DJ, you get to LMC...do the dansettes start to come in about this time?

PJ I'll just go through something [first] that was really important for my development. I met up with a dancer called Laurie Booth who also was at Dartington, but not at the same time as me. I met him at this place X6 in London, and he'd seen me play with a couple of people. I did quite a lot of playing with Cris Cheek. He's a writer, and also a musician as well. I played around with ideas with him quite a lot. We'd do DJ-ing for parties together as a duo, but we were also playing around at our houses. Laurie had seen me at one of these events. We were both at some event at the Oval House, and afterwards he said 'Phil, I've got this gig coming up at the Zap Club in Brighton. Do you want to come, do you want to play music while I dance?' So I did that, it was good and quite a few people enjoyed it, and that ended up - that was about 1984 I think - and I worked with him right until about 1990. We pretty well toured the world! All over Europe, went to America. And we never really rehearsed. It was like an improvised scene. I felt I developed what I did on the road. It started out really rough, not know what I was doing, and just by doing it - things just developed. At that time I was using modern turntables and mixers...how I got into using the dansettes was that I had some 78s that I wanted to use to play, and I saw in a charity shop an old record player. It had 78 speed, and it had a little tape-out [socket]. So I thought I could put that through the mixer. I got it home. It had the 78, 45, 33 rpm speeds, but it also had the 16 rpm speed. When I slowed down some of the records to that, it was - wow! This is fantastic! And I suppose that if I've ever had an epiphany, that was it! Getting that record player home and playing it...I pretty well stopped using the modern turntables and switched to using the old ones, almost in an instant. The slow speed, and the sound of it. I loved this lo-fidelity, it did something to the sound, altered it and shifted it in some way, that I just really liked. I thought this is great, I loved this. So I started collecting them and then realised a lot of them had got speakers. Maybe I could do some sort of installation, just not putting them through any amplification, just have a little orchestra of them with their own speakers. Also each one has its own particular sound. They're like individuals. If you play the same record on loads of different players, they all sound different! It was while working with Laurie, he'd gotten some funding to have a dance company, so I was doing sound for that. And one time he brought in this film-maker Lol Sargent for one of the projects. And I got on really well with him. We were talking about ideas - I was telling him my idea of doing a little orchestra with [record] players. And he said it would be great if he also made some films to go with it. Also at the time - this was getting towards the end of the 1980s - and it was a time when the record department in record stores, the vinyl department was really shrinking. And the CD department was taking over. So it was like a real change. Just from the

conversation [with Lol], we thought now would be a great time to do something like that, in a way it could be a little marking of that change. That shift from one thing to the other. In a way, a little bit of a tribute to vinyl! So we came up with the idea of 'Vinyl Requiem'. So, with the production company based in London, friends of mine, over a few years we got enough money together to do this. By that time I'd moved to Stoke on Trent. Moved out of London, had a child, really wanted to not be in London any more. And so I starting creating. And I wanted to do it with a *lot* of record players. Have an enormous amount. And it finally was done with 180, 180 record players were used. Obviously I couldn't operate them all myself. The project needed three other people that I had to teach and train to do what I wanted them to do with it. And then it was all mounted on scaffold, the size of a cinema screen. So the record players were playing away. The operators they all wore white. Lol worked with two 16mm movie projectors and nine 35mm slide projectors, which were made for animation...it was this big film and sound event. But the sound really did come right out of the screen. The sound would come from different places. It was just a big orchestra of record players.

EP Where was this staged?

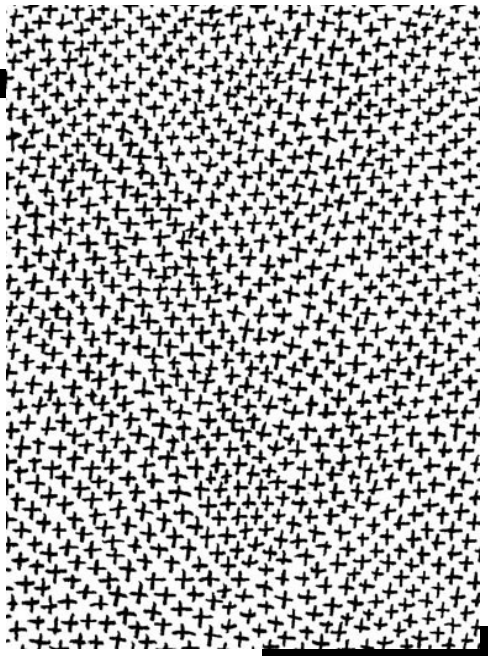
PJ Part of the funding came from a place in Belgium, so we spent three weeks there putting it all together, all the technical back-up needed, and me teaching these people how to operate it, what to do with the turntables. I'd worked out ideas at home already for the composition of it, but it changed with the characteristics of the people, what the people could do. So it was developed over that three week period, and also with the films, marrying the right images to the right sections. That was a piece that was really, really composed. It was pretty well the same each time, each time it was done. We had some variations where the record players go slow, do different things. There was a real score and a composition that they played, they knew what to do. They all had stopwatches. And matching the sound to the images...sometimes that was quite important, there were things we really wanted to happen, some of the visuals to really happen with the sound. And so in the end - I thought maybe it could all be done by ear, but when you're working with the speakers the sound obviously, really the people that are doing the operating can only really hear the record player that's right next to them. It pretty well drowns everything else out. So that's one of the reasons why I wasn't in it. I had to be out of it, so I could really hear it. I just did two short solos with about five record players out front as part of the piece. It lasted about 70 minutes, the whole piece, and I was only in it for about 15 minutes. I had to be outside it to really hear it. So we did it there, and then we did it in London at Union Chapel, in the church. They were the best performances! We also did it again in Hamburg, but the best two were the ones at Union Chapel. A requiem should be in a church, of course. Then, the acoustics...it was just fantastic. We did it two nights. It was fully [attended], it was packed out, it was fantastic. 500 or 600 people came each night.

EP In terms of marrying the records with the images, did you do some careful selection of what records you wanted?

PJ Yes, it was quite careful. Much more careful than the way that I work now. It was all really quite carefully considered, what worked with what.

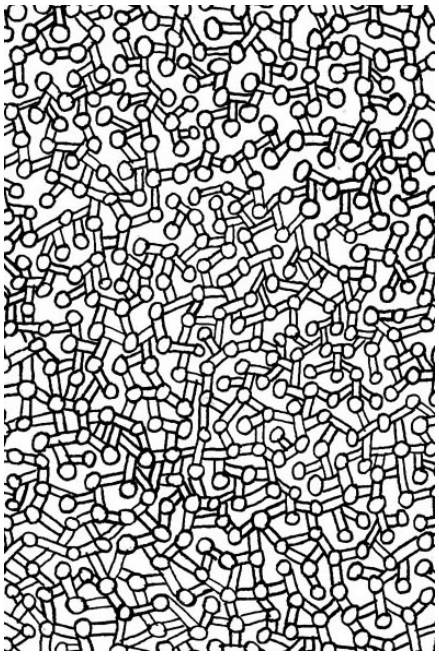
EP What were Lol Sargent's images? Found images?

PJ His thing was partly like a reflection of the movement from analogue to digital as well [as from vinyl to CD], so the images became more digital towards the end. In a way it was quite a mood-thing as well, quite a lot of animation with the slides, things would shift, movements of shapes or whatever, or a room turning on the screen. I was trying in a way to reflect that in sound, so that the sound also shifted across the whole screen the same way as the images. It completely and utterly exhausted me! It took several years of work to do that. We got quite a lot of funding, but in the end pretty well all the funding went on the production, and so we almost made no money out of that whatsoever, Lol and I. Of course, we paid everybody that took part. The technicians. To make it all work, it had a crew of about 15 people, so imagine how expensive that is. Plus transport.



EP What influence did this dancer Laurie Booth have on your work?

PJ As I say, I developed what I do on the road, [working] with him. I used to go and see quite a lot of dance, with Mary being a dancer. And then also I was involved when X6 had to close down because Butler's Wharf was being bought up by developers, they found another space in the East End of London over in Bow, Chisenhale. They got together with a lot of the artists that were based at Butler's Wharf, and they found the building in Bow which became the Chisenhale Gallery and Studios. But also they had a dance space. I became a member of Chisenhale dance space, running the place and deciding what would be on. They had strong connections to performance art people as well, people like Rose English, who was also around X6. So we carried out quite a lot of performance work at Chisenhale as well as the



dance, and we did cabaret nights. We mixed up quite interesting things and put them together. I remember one cabaret night, we had Julien Clary who was then known as Joan Collins Fan Club, on the same night as - she wasn't so well known, but she's quite a well known choreographer now - Yolande Snaith, did a little dance solo. All part of the same evening. It was introducing quite experimental contemporary dance work into a cabaret setting, which in a way was something that made me look back to the 30s in Berlin. People were doing quite weird things [then]. And also the original Music Hall in Britain, there was some amazing acts that now would only maybe be seen in a contemporary art gallery, they're so wacky! I wanted it to have that feel. So we had a real mixture of things. Straight-ahead comedy, then maybe somebody would sing or something, then something slightly off the wall. The Cholmondeleys [Lea Anderson's all-female dance troupe] performed in one of our cabarets as well when they were just starting out. It was really a fantastic, vibrant [scene]. I really loved that time. We had open [evenings]...each month we had a cha-cha-cha night, which was basically anybody that wanted to come and perform, if they'd got a new piece or a dance piece, they could be programmed. And we really did it completely first-come first-served. So you just didn't know what you were gonna get. And out of it, people that in the dance world are really quite well known now, some of their first performances were in those evenings. So it was good! In that world [of dance] - I've worked with other dancers, done sound for other dancers. I'll be doing something in London and Brighton, a project, a little group of mostly American dancers, in January or February next year. It depends on the funding. But I think it might well happen. Mary has - she's met up with other dancers that live in Liverpool and they've done a little tour, formed an improvisation company, and they're doing a tour. I'm playing with them in Lancaster this Tuesday night.

EP I like the idea of breaking down the barriers between these different art disciplines. I like this Kill Your Timid Notion festival. It's very lively and I like the film aspects to it. The films you were showing, were these films you made yourself?

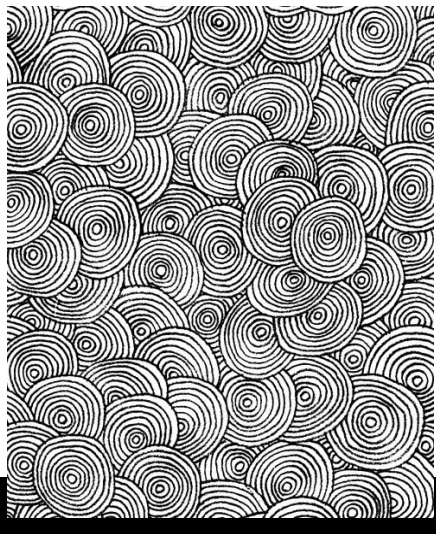
PJ Yes, they're completely lo-fi, in the way that the sound is. I do have a laptop which I have video editing facilities on, which I do use occasionally. But those films were completely shot in-camera, there's no - nothing else added, other than the actual film in the camera. I've got two camcorders at home. I've got a Hi-8 I've had for a long time, and then last year I bought a digital DV camera as well. I can then edit - it goes straight into the computer through the cable. It's really easy. I just shot some footage - one of a record turning, and one of those fibre-optic things that you buy from a Pound Shop. And just filmed them, and then I just refilmed it and refilmed it from a television. So it goes down to about the 30th generation, and so it just turns into blobs of colour. Each time I refilmed it, the colour was turned full up on the screen, and the contrast full up, so the colours just changed. At the end it just goes to these red and yellow blobs turning around, these colours just appeared.

EP When did you first start putting out CDs?

PJ The first one I did came out in 1995. And that was - I remember being asked by Jon Wozencroft. I was doing something at the Goethe Institut. There was this [exhibition] - Soundworks Exchange it was called, which was 3 or 4 British sound-artists or musicians or whatever you want to call them, and the same amount of German ones, just spending a weekend together and talking about art, showing work and playing music. And then we all did a short set on the last evening that the public were invited to. It was after I did my performance there, Jon was there and came and he said, did I want to do a CD for Touch? So I said yes. And spent time putting pieces together at home, sent him the DAT and they released it.

EP Was that your first ever release?

PJ Yes, it was. Actually, it's not the first time I ever come out on a recording. I missed out something that was important as well. Cris Cheek and Sianed Jones were a duo working and playing together. They were like songwriters - they asked me to join them and play with them. I appeared on a vinyl [release], they were called Slant - they made a vinyl record and I also did two CDs [*The Slant*, and *The Canning Town Chronicle*] with them. We had guest musicians on there, like Max Eastley plays on one of the CDs, and Dean Speedwell, and we had Andy Cowton who was a percussionist and computer-programmer.



EP So the CDs started to come

out...was it different working in a studio to playing it live?

PJ Well, I've not done any records in the studio. I've done them at home, or they're edits of live concerts, or they're completely live. I have worked in studios as well. With Slant we worked in the studio. But most of my work I either do at home or it's recorded on the road. Although the ones that have come out - the *Vinyl Coda* [series] - on the German label [Intermedium], the original one, that what a commission. Funnily enough, this was also through the Goethe Institut, because I also did another of these Soundworks Exchange things but it was for the main Goethe Institut which is in Munich. And somebody from Bavarian Radio came to see that, and they said afterwards 'I think probably Bavarian Radio would be interested in commissioning you to do a piece.' By chance, I was going back the next month to Munich with a dance company. I said, 'I'll be back in a month'. He said, 'Tell me the dates when you're free and I'll fix up a meeting with the head of the radio station.' It was the department that does the more left-field things. So I went and met them and - yeah, fantastic - they said 'yes, we'd like you to do something...we'll pay you a lot of money, and you can have the week in our studio. You can do two programmes, an hour one and a half-hour one.' So the [Vinyl Coda] records were made for radio. I thought maybe I was going to record music and put it out, but in the end I did them live, completely live. I used 14 record players for that. It was good. I actually won prizes for that! I got one which was - all the radio stations in Germany they have a vote on radio programme of the month, and I won that! I couldn't believe it. And then I was up for this prize which has been going since the 1930s - previous winners have been people like Bertolt Brecht, and I won second prize in that! I got money, as well. I went to a proper awards ceremony in South-West Germany. It was wonderful to have that sort of recognition. I got this parchment paper with my name on, and a fat cheque for a lot of Euros! So it was brilliant! They also sold that on to other radio stations, so I kept getting cheques from other companies that had bought it. They played it two or three times and each time they played it, I got a third of my original fee again.

EP It's a shame that equivalent opportunities don't seem to exist in this country.

PJ I remember saying to them - 'there would be no *way* on earth this would ever happen in Britain!' To get a commission for an hour and a half work on the radio. You'd have to be Harrison Birtwhistle or somebody to get that, wouldn't you? I did a 15 minute set for *Mixing It* [on BBC Radio 3], and I got 200 quid for that. For the work in Germany, they paid me £3,000. And from then on, over the next two years with all the repeat plays, I probably earned close on £12-13,000 from that one week. And then the CDs came out as well, and I'd get money from that too. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven! And they had really great engineers who helped me, they'd get the rights mics for the sound I wanted. It was good, and I've done other work for them since as well...*Vinyl Coda 3* and *Vinyl Coda 4*. Then I also did a duet with a German turntable guy, Klaus Karlbauer, which was recorded at a festival in Carlsruhe which was put out on CD as well.

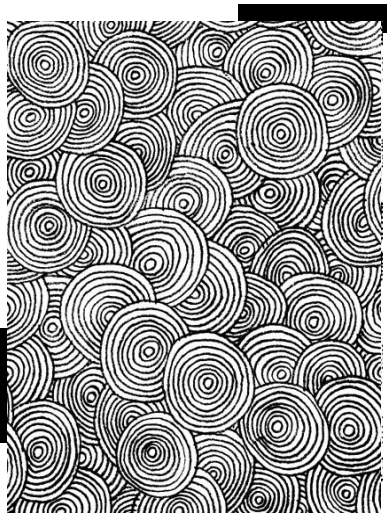
EP Was this the one that came out on Touch?

PJ No. Jacob [Kirkegaard] is somebody I met last year at a Moers jazz festival. They have a little offshoot of it called Electronic Lounge, where this guy Frank invites...each year he has six people working in electronica or whatever, and just sit and play. He'd done some scores and played in various combinations like in a building where the people could come and watch and also did some performances. And Jacob was one of the other people on that, and I got on with him really well, and that CD that came out [*Soaked*] was our live set from the last Moers festival. Luckily, we recorded it, and when Jacob sent me the CD copy of it, I thought 'I'm sure Touch would like this', so I immediately made a copy and sent it to them, and they said yes straight away. They put it out within a couple of months. I've just done a little bit of touring with Jacob as well over the last few months.

EP Do you have any idea of how your work is perceived? Do people come up to you and say...

PJ Yeah, yeah, I do. Quite a few people last night, I was talking to them, and that's always very nice when people come up and say they liked it, that's absolutely wonderful. But in a way I feel slightly separate from a lot of it, up in Liverpool. But I realised - I have had an influence on people. There's people saying to me 'You're the reason I'm doing this', and there are quite a few young people, like Janek Schaefer is one. I knew Janek since - I know his mother, I'm friendly with his mum so I knew Janek when he was a little boy. I've certainly been an influence on him. And other people tell me this...'You don't quite realise how many people you obviously have influenced'. Which is great. It's nice - because I was influenced by people as well. Christian Marclay early on was quite an influence for me. I did see him in the early 80s when he came to London with a dance company, although he performed up in one of the technical lighting boxes, he wasn't on stage. I remember talking to him after the show and said 'Shame I couldn't see you', and he said 'Come back tonight and sit with me in the box!' So I saw him at first hand, which was really nice. That was a big influence on me, not that I played like him, but what he gave me was [a sense of] how far you can take it, really. He was really taking things to extremes, which was fantastic. I just went to a festival in Montreal earlier in the year, and there was a quartet. It was Martin

Tétreault, Martin Ng who's Australian, and Marina Rosenfeld who's an American turntable player. And we got interviewed afterwards by Canadian radio, and one of the questions was 'Who are your influences?' And Marina said, 'Well, it's Philip Jeck and Christian Marclay!' Which was lovely, I wasn't expecting that.



EP I always find your music very moving. I suppose a lot of people say that. Certainly seeing it live, it was quite extraordinarily sad...is it deliberate?

PJ Yes, it is. Maybe it's partly because I don't have a real musical technique or anything, I don't really play anything very well. So what I go on is my emotional connection to the sound. That's what I work on, that's my impetus for making the next move, making the next scene, is how I feel. And so I think that comes out in the music, it has an emotional core to it, and feel to it. I hope it's moving, because I want it to be. To me, that's one of the purposes of the art of music, is to move people in some way, whatever way. To have some sense, some connection...to connect with the world and make some sense of things. I can put all these bits of junk and discarded record players and records together and make something very beautiful out of it. To me, that's lovely...you know, I really love playing! I get very nervous before [I go on stage], but once I start playing...I feel I can do anything.

EP I think connection is the important word there, because I've heard so much modern music now in which the people who produce it aren't really connecting with *anything*. They may have a system...some kind of compositional system...

PJ ...and some nice software!!

EP...and they've got the sounds, but that's about as far as it goes. The program can play itself out, and the idea can play itself out, but the human connection is completely missing from the equation.

PJ Yeah. There's quite a lot in that laptop world which just leaves me a bit cold, I can't really get that much from it.

EP You're completely analogue, by contrast.

PJ I'm not completely analogue, that's not really true. I've got the Casio keyboard, the SK-1, which does samples, so it's digital...but it's really low-grade. It distorts the sound as much as anything else, and I like that. I think it probably was the first sampling keyboard you could get on the high street. They don't make anything else like it any more, which is terrible. I'm terrified if I just break it, because I absolutely love it! Fantastic machine. Also I have the effects pedals as well, I have a delay pedal, to set up a few loops.

EP Do you know your records quite well?

PJ Some of them well, some of them not at all. It's always a mixture of records I know reasonably well that I play, and ones that almost I've never played before. And I quite like the element of testing myself with something that I'm not really sure about, and I'm trying to find out where I can take that. In a way, it's a surprise to me, so I have to really listen. Sometimes when you're working with really familiar records you almost stop listening, a bit. But when it's really unfamiliar then you have to listen again. Go right into it. I think that helps me focus more on what I'm doing.

EP And you're quite familiar with your dansettes as well?

PJ Sort of...they're a pain to transport around. Sometimes it would be great to play the flute, or something. There's the attraction of being a laptop musician. A tiny briefcase, that's all you need! It's like hand luggage, for God's sake! Brilliant, nothing heavy to carry. I like that aspect of it.

EP One thing that intrigued me was the Wall Of Sound exhibit you mounted at the South Bank gallery, the big wall of turntables and record players. The lids of the dansettes had messages written in them in chalk.

PJ Yeah. They're cut-ups of record sleeves. Direct from sleeve notes. Most of my recent releases that have been on Touch, *Surf, Soaked* and the new one that's coming out, again my little sleeve notes on there are actually cut-ups of other sleeve notes, from other records. And then I've rearranged them and then tried to make...took some random sentences off different sleeves, put them together, and then tried to make sense of them, making one paragraph out of them to make some other sentence. In the [same] way that I'm using the records, put them together and then try to make some sense out of them. So it's just a reflection of the audio sound in writing.

EP The rest of that exhibition [Sonic Boom] wasn't very good for me.

PJ There was some nice things in it. I did like Christian Marclay's thing, the Guitar Drag, that was really nice, that was good. But I felt sorry for Max's things, because they were really quiet and small. They just were overwhelmed by other sounds. They were little scratchy sounds and you couldn't really hear them. It needed to be completely in a room on its own where you could really hear those quiet and small sounds.

EP It was interesting to hear you say last night you like Country and Western music.

PJ Yeah, I'm a big fan! Big fan!

EP And one of your ideals would be to appear on a Dolly Parton record?

PJ Oh, yeah. That would be good. I could retire! I have a real catholic taste in music, but one of my favourite musics is Country and Western. I really love people like Dolly Parton, Tammy Wynette, George Jones, Johnny Cash...and there's a new breed of country people, like Alison Krauss, Gillian Welch, they've come to prominence recently because of being used in the Coen Brothers film, *O Brother Where Art Thou*. And then there was a documentary made [*Down from the Mountain*] of a concert of all those people that did the music for the film, and that's just a really nice film. So I've always related to it. And I quite like the idea of putting my music into another context. I've been doing this work with Jah Wobble with a proper band, and it's very nice to be putting my music and finding a way of it working in that context. And I'd love to do that with all sorts of combinations, but particularly a dream of mine is to one day be on some really great country singer's record...on one track, just one moment somewhere that I could play something.

EP Which Jah Wobble record are you on?

PJ The new one, by Jah Wobble's Deep Space. It's called *Five Beat*. It's his most recent CD. It was great working with him, really enjoyed it.

EP What interests me saying you like Country and Western music, is that I like some of it also - a little bit of Johnny Cash, The Judds, Willie Nelson - but it's incredibly direct, and it's very unambiguous. And yet to me your music seems quite oblique, and extremely ambiguous!

PJ Maybe that's why I like it, because it's completely the opposite. That may be a real reason. But one thing I do feel about what I do, and maybe other people don't think that, but for me - one of the things when I'm playing is that I want it to be like that sound when I first started buying records, when I was about 12 years old, went and bought a Spencer Davis Group or a Beatles single, got it home, and you put that needle onto it and then that first - cssshh! - magical sound that comes out of it and I still love that and I feel those moments when I'm playing - wow, what an amazing sound that is! You know, just Wow! So I think it's connected in that way. I suppose it's because I'm not a singer or anything like that...but I love songs. There's a lot of shit country music as well, but the ones that are good are really good. There's lots of shit pop music but there is good pop music in the world. And there still is. I really like Destiny's Child, Beyoncé...I think that kind of pop music is really fantastically good. Not profound or anything, but I enjoy listening to it.

EP What do you hear, the production?

PJ No, I suppose everything! Just the overall sound. I'm not a big one for getting right into hearing the production. I can be an anorak about it if I want, and I enjoy talking about particular things like how that was made, it is interesting to me, but in the general population it isn't, and that's not what people are buying records for. They just like the sound! And if they like the sound, that's what they want. So that's the first thing for me, do I like the sound? Does that connect with me in some way? And when it does...what usually really gets to me is a very good voice. Straight off. I really like Frank Sinatra, I love his voice. He's maybe done some duff records as well, but he always was a good singer. And Dolly Parton is a great singer. Johnny Cash was not a great singer, but he had a great presence. Which is another thing that you can have that really moves an audience. It doesn't matter that he's not the world's best singer, he still conveys what he has to convey, which is good.

EP So tell me about this planned guitar group of yours [with Fennesz and Hazard].

PJ Yeah, this would be an offshoot, a slightly different thing. I'd be using a minimal turntable set-up, and probably using just 1960s pop records, limit myself to a particular range of music. And Benny and Christian will play guitars. I hope it will happen sometime, I'm sure it will. We were backstage somewhere in Switzerland, just sort of chatting and someone goes 'what a great idea!' We're partly talking about that thing that the electronica world can be a bit dull. This would be a nice thing. The electric guitar is a great instrument. It's changed the world, in a way. Being able to electrify a guitar...that's what pop music supposed could happen.

EP One does notice this, the number of gigs I've been to...even this festival proves it to a certain extent. Most of the time you're simply watching people sitting there with a laptop...

PJ Yes, that's why it was good to see a couple of actual bands playing! Acid Mothers Temple...that's one of the reasons I stayed over, I wanted to see them.

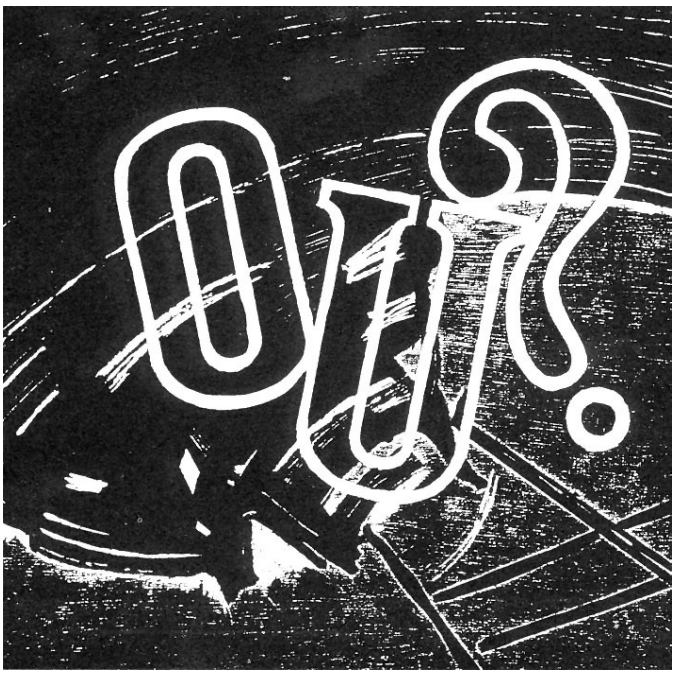
EP Mind you, there is a 'return' to basic guitar rock music...so the 'experts' are saying.

PJ Well, maybe me and Benny are getting on the bandwagon at the right time then! No, I don't think we'll be like a rock band somehow.

EP Anything else my readers should know about Philip Jeck?

PJ Yeah, I'm available for weddings and bar-mitzvahs at a very reasonable price! □

A sounding-box des mots exquis



Various Sound Poets

Henri Chopin's Revue OU - Cinquième Saison: complete recordings

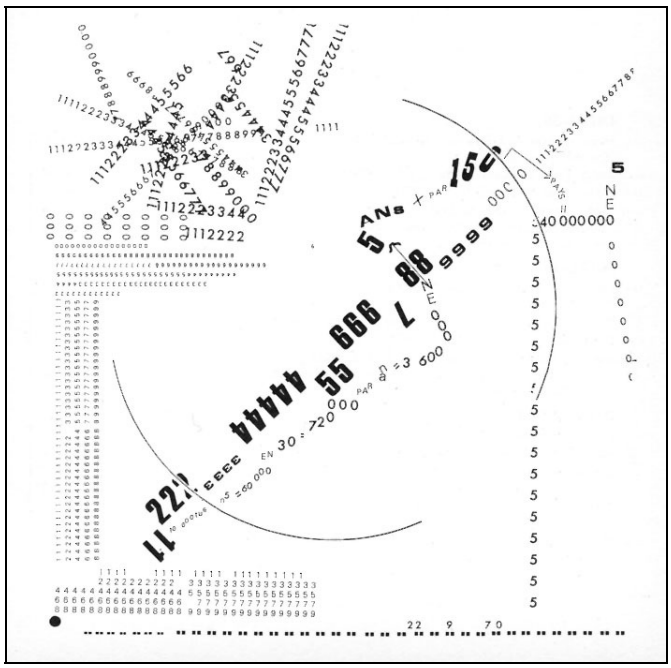
ITALY ALGA MARGHEN O45U 4 x CD BOX (2002)

Sound poetry? What is it? Many things...perhaps a nebulous zone of activity where the human voice, poetry, microphones, amplification, electro-acoustic and electronic music, cut-ups, musique concrète and tape manipulation all meet. You could keep piling on definitions and pigeon-holes and still not account for one fraction of the wild ideas gathered together in this staggering boxed set. Herein be secret documents, magickal preparations, recorded sound poetry work from the 1960s to early 1970s, by a clutch of important practitioners - wizards, alchemists and magi - who were brought together by the grand imperial magister himself, Henri Chopin. Chopin is a French sound poet veteran (he started this project 'in defence of records and the tape recorder for poetry' in 1958) who is still, I gather, doing it to this day, and delighting and confounding audiences wherever he goes. This retrospective collection emerged from the Alga Marghen organisation in 2002, and reissues all the recordings ever published in Chopin's fine-art periodical. The original packages came out (mostly) as 10-inch LPs, with additional lithographs and silkscreen prints, in print runs of 500 or 1000, and mailed out to whoever had ears to listen. Chopin selected some of the finest names from the international sound-poetry and concrete-poetry movement, and represented them well in his choices of recorded works and printed pieces. If you buy the CD set of this you get a fat explanatory booklet and lots of inserts, facsimiles of the printed strand of this work - dazzling examples of concrete poetry, experiments in typography, collages, diagrams, prose instructions for creating art. And if you buy the LP version you get gorgeous picture disc versions (something Alga Marghen has been specialising in ever since they started reissuing important sound poetry LPs in the 1990s) and an extra recording not in the CD set. So clearly you need both exemplars. In case you think I'm wallowing in 'promo' heaven when I say this, I'm proud to say I paid for my own copy of this monster.

What amazes you first? The sound of it, obviously. If you don't believe me, just listen - try starting off with, say, Disc Two in this set. You'll feel like you entered another world, where human beings (and their voices) developed and mutated in quite a different way. The unearthly sonic qualities on this pulsing beast are totally unlike any recordings you have heard anywhere. The entire box set emanates a glow of unreal transcendent beauty, like an ancient artefact retrieved from a distant planet. You could spend a lifetime decoding the meanings from these profound and amazing texts; but without doubt the first thing that will grab you is the strange quality of the sounds. Human voices strangely altered through performance, through recording, tape-editing, and mixture with foreign electronic sounds.

Bernard Heidsieck, the French sound poet, is one of the major names in this field and has been represented on Alga Marghen with several releases devoted to his strange and powerful work. An electrifying performer, his live work (according to witnesses) borders on being alarming, as he pins everything on the intensity of meaning he can bring to the reading of each syllable in his hyper-dense texts. Wrenching every last iota of energy from his body to pour into his poetry, he barks, snaps and spits out words as though throwing daggers; often he works with chopped-up phrases and backs himself up (on record, and in the live situation) with tape recordings. Three of his 'Poème-partition' experiments are on disc one; here you can enjoy the striking use of overlapping voices, belting out streams of words with more information than you can listen to (or even understand, if you don't speak French). 'Poème-partition J' uses extensive cut-ups of documentary recordings in a rough collage colliding with the live reading; shocking edits result, as he veers from shouting words, to humming a low drone from his mouth, to making long SSSSH noises. 'Poème-partition H1 and H2' melds at least two or more voices in a complex overlapping structure, alternating from readings to a hectoring admonition, all intercut with an alarming voice urging 'Plus Vite! Plus Vite!' Further field recordings, mostly of an urban nature (traffic sounds and the like) are micro-edited on 'La Cage', 'L'Exercice' and 'La Convention Collective', three short works that combine his rapid-fire delivery with tape-echoed voice effects. All of these are intensive as a dose of penicillin and as scarifying as a night spent with the

owls; for something slightly calmer, turn to 'Quel Age Avez Vous?' on disc two for evidence of the steely precision of Heidsieck's approach; he uses a steady vocal delivery and razor-sharp tape edits to generate overlapped and folded voices producing crystal-clear statements of unintelligible clarity. By 1969, on 'Ravaillac, tu connais?', he's back in full attack mode, overlaying a series of short repeated phrases in aggressive tones.



Chopin had a personal system of taxonomy for appraising this work. He makes it clear that he needed a new aesthetic to account for the artistic freedom he had discovered in the work of his compadres and his own efforts; existing methods of appraising the value of poetry clearly being inadequate, and there being no descriptive terms whatsoever to account for this new work, he went and invented his own. Heidsieck is, according to Chopin, one of the poets 'attached to explicit meanings', in which category he also places the Dutchman Paul de Vree, Frenchman Mimmo Rotella and Czech Ladislav Novak. François Dufrêne is another significant contributor. Another veteran, he was first associated with the very severe French 'Lettrism' school that slightly preceded Chopin's activities, a school of art concerned with atomising language into its constituent parts. Dufrêne would later claim that Chopin (and indeed most of the contributors to OU) were merely a sub-set of the earlier Lettrism movement. Chopin fiercely contested this untenable view - in fact his lengthy riposte, reprinted from an art journal, is included in the box set. This squabble aside, it's clear that Dufrêne's work is tremendously important. His three short pieces on disc one are described as 'Criryhtmes' in Chopin's taxonomical scheme; they're perplexing collections of muttered whispers and guttural sounds delivered at high speeds, amounting almost to a secret language of vocables, throaty whimpers and inane gibbering. In 1958, Dufrêne had trained his voice like an athlete and was already a past-master of the snort, the nasal whine and the grunt. Listening to this first disc will prepare the ground for the initiate, showing the enormous range of human sounds that are admissible as sound poetry - anything issued from or generated using the mouth, throat, teeth, cheeks, tongue, lungs and diaphragm is fair game for these whooping loons.

On 1966's 'Triptycriryhtme', Dufrêne freaks out with a long coughing and spluttering fit using overdubbed voices; a primitive communication is wrenched out in sneezes, gasps and belches on this jagged eruption, ever growing in intensity. He also does the 'snoring and sucking' thing with tremendous flair, sounding like a sleeping man simultaneously snoring and eating a big bowl of spaghetti. We next hear from Dufrêne in 1967, where he turns in a tribute to Chopin composed of gasps, sobs, high-pitched banshee wails, and guttural half-stopped and strangulated breaths, all amplified and overdubbed into a three-minute mouth musical. Then, there's 'Haut-Satur', a major long work in three parts comprising heavily-amplified and echoed snorty-snuffling work. Packed with plenty of slurping and drooling effects, heavy panting and sobbing gasps, and a ghastly whining that may result from feedback...he sounds like three metallic kittens mewing at once on this most 'animalistic' of pieces. The second section from 1967 is particularly explosive...his own oral cavity is transformed into a minefield.

I can see you're impressed already. Does this mean the death of language as we know it, when the human voice is reduced to a sounding box, and language is to be nothing more than a stream of neanderthal grunts? Au contraire. Chopin sees it quite the opposite way, proudly proclaiming sound poetry as a new universal language, a language of sound, governed by sophisticated artistic methods and packed with the potential for more genuine and more direct communication with the human race, and returning the listener to a blessed primordial state where conventional spoken language meant nothing. It is language itself that is dead, language as it has evolved by the so-called civilised 20th century, language that repeatedly fails to communicate anything of real value. 'This essential of the pure voice, of the voice in the ages before man even knew how to read and write,' enthuses Chopin. 'With it, I discovered the FREE noises of it and those voices, which obey no language.'

Henri Chopin himself obeyed no language, and no rules but his own...as evidence he released some of his finest pieces in the Revue OU. His personal method made much use of the very physicality of his own body, particularly his mouth and his own breath, the latter of which is heavily emphasised frequently; and he was not averse to using tape treatments, echo, and electronic sound to accompany himself. Describing most of his works as 'audio-poèmes' in his descriptive naming system, Chopin leads off with 'Vibrespace', a monumental 'gasper' of a piece from 1963. He whimpers, whines and howls over metallic noises with lots of echo, inhales deeply and emits bubbles, beeps and a broth of saliva as he smacks his teeth. 'L'energie du sommeil' is indeed a hymn to the power of sleep, and the dreams that come trickling out of a Frenchman's mind as he snores. Breaths, whistling and tiny little grunts join the ectoplasmic apparitions. On 'Indicatif 1', he breathes down long tubes to make howling and droning sounds; does the same on 'Sol Air', taking in mighty gasps and throwing in lots of staccato tongue-slapping. Whispered snatches of poetry leak in; monstrous groans are issued; tapes of this activity are edited together, to make this one of the more perplexing and haunting works represented here.

'Le Corps' is one of Chopin's major statements, showing his abiding interest in body art (he might be exploring his own interior through sound) and so lengthy that it originally took up all of issues 30-31! Another breathing and whistling epic, proving the man had lungs like bagpipes back in the mid-60s, this work treats us to a full exploration of his lungs and lights, with lots of alien overdubs and edits. Crunchy, saliva-filled textures - all the juiciness of the human frame's fluids is here. 'Le Corps' is virtually the centrepiece to the box set; an exciting and intuitive tape-construction of rhythms and layers of sound that forms a new sort of music. Squeek-beep beep-whimper-gasp! The third part has a deep sonorous rumbling that makes even major doomoid sound-artists like Karkowski sound pretty pathetic. One of the most unique set of sounds you will ever hear, and a true 'song of the body' - Chopin has entered every part of the cadaver to bring back uncanny musical statements. Not content with that, he tells us more about the story of his lungs on the awesome recording 'Mes Bronches' from 1968; the heavy and smothering bass sounds at the start are deliciously oppressive and give the sensation of being locked in a vault. Another endoscopy special...share my phlegm! he invites us. Instead of normal human lungs, he perhaps had two inflatable armadillos in his chest cavity, trained to attack the unwary.

I did say this was an international sampling, but it seems the French are dominating it so far. Well, from England, we have Bob Cobbing - a giant of a man who died recently and whose true contribution to the English avant-garde has yet to be fully celebrated or documented. On 'Marvo Movie Natter', he produces a recording no doubt intended for one of Jeff Keen's movies - Keen (the Brighton-based film-maker, still enjoying a healthy life and film retrospectives today) is present in the choir of voices that produces a vaguely sinister whispering dialogue, with vaguely audible old 78s playing in the background. Three participants here - it's a chorus of Gollums. Cobbing follows this up with 'Spontaneous Appealinair Contemprate Apollinaire', a duo recording with Dufrêne, on which one of them growls like a bear and the other provides yawping warbles; there may be overdubs, or even backwards tapes here, which produce this slightly unsettling and eerie effect. Might I point out that Cobbing is one of the few in the whole box of mostly solo turns to get some group actions going here? He was engaged in that sort of particpatory scene all his life, I gather. Full marks. We also have Hugh Davies from England, playing his 'Shozyg' box. I love Hugh Davies but for some reason his is the weakest cut in the box. Tom Philips, the English painter, isn't on record but his graphic score for the Irma musical derived from A Humument is one of the inserts in the box.

Dutchman Paul de Vree has five cuts on the 2nd CD which will amaze you. He used help from collaborators - he wrote the texts, but had them spoken

by Julien Schoenaerts, while an electro-acoustic musician Bruydonckx recorded them and put the tapes together. The reader has a sonorous deep voice - one listen to 'Veronika' and you won't forget that sound - and delivers the semi-lyrical mystical phrases with deliberate, slow intonation. With use of several overdubs and tape loops, simple rhythms are quickly set up, and these miniatures are sinister and awe-inspiring works.

From Sweden, the great Sten Hanson shows his bearded and four-eyed visage to great affect. Get this and the compilation CD on Fylkingen (see Sweden section) to have your mind warped the Swedish way. He tends to opt for a single striking phrase which he wants to draw your attention to, and repeats it - or re-uses recordings of it - in imaginative and ingenious ways, looping, treating, slowing tapes, and putting them modulators and filters to grind the human elements right out of the words. One of his works is an anti-Vietnam reading with a looped protestor's chant; another simulates sound of a railway train; 'Revolution' calls for some kind of rearrangement of human affairs and points out the futility of communication, by concealing key phrases 'I'm calling you' and 'Do something' in among clouds of heavy interference. Elegant, minimal solutions.

From America, we have Brion Gysin, William Burroughs, and Charles Amirkahnian. First off I'm no great admirer of Bill Burroughs, and I skip past these on the set because I also hate the sound of his voice so much. But it they are extremely important documents and brilliant readings. His 'Valentine Day reading' from 1965 is an extract from his own The Last Words of Dutch Schultz, read by the author in his interminable drawl. It's punctuated - frequently -with harshly grating sound-effects that resemble crashing cars, gunfire, high-pitched screams and door buzzers, all of which interrupt your listening pleasure as much as the flow of the nightmarish narrative, which I gather is pretty much the idea. From the same year, we also get 'Reading', which mostly consists of Burroughsian notions of how to steal ideas and methods from other writers, by using the cut-up technique in subtle ways...quite intriguing in its way, and wildly subversive.

Amirkahnian gets one piece, captured near the start of his career - he was about to do many great things in the 1970s, but this 1971 poem alone is fantastic. He is more interested in poem construction than in creating an interesting sound, and the exacting precision with which each fragmented syllable is arranged and delivered is evident. It almost arrives at something musical through its expert edits of varying pitches of voice.

Gysin is likewise impressive. Like Hanson he makes uses of one single significant phrase at a time, but his method is to keep chopping it up into constituent words, and re-reading them with different emphasis and accent until new meanings start to leak out between the gaps. Surprisingly effective. 'I am' from 1960 takes one basic phrase (as it happens a Jewish Old Testament text to express the inexpressiblity of Yahweh), and jumbles up the meaning through use of speeded-up voices and tape echo. His 'Pistol Poem' from the same year moves voices in and out wildly fading back and forth in the aural picture - with appropriate miniature explosions. From about the same period, 'Poems' composed in 1960-1962 has Gysin talking while he writes on a blackboard, adopting the didactic style of an academic as he quietly demolishes most of Western civilisation with his radical anti-poetry sentiments which demonstrate the utter futility of trying to communicate through art.

In addition, you get four 'vintage' poems from the original Dada veteran, Raoul Hausmann. Four of them written just after the First World War, another from 1946; he fires his consonants like bullets of steel in his machine-gun voice on these exquisite miniatures. He also produces a sarcastic whine that leaves you in no doubt as to his views on the futility of the post-war landscape. The 1946 piece does the same, filled with a grand spirit of absurdity; his consonants and words are truncated until they're chopped into mincemeat. He wasn't without lyricism, though; 'Oiseutal' is a lovely birdsong portrait.

Henri Chopin reserves the final track and the last word for himself, with 1971's 'Les Mandibules du Déjeuner sur l'Herbe'. Rich singing electronic tones and feedback mix with his own mad chattering and frenzied breathing. It sounds like an audio-portrait of an enraged insect. With its clever reference to the Edouard Manet painting of the picnic which is enshrined within our culture a bourgeois 'establishment' work of high art, Chopin makes it clear he would like to be the beetle that eats that picnic with his mandibles, thus cutting to pieces and despoiling everything European culture stands for. Which is pretty much what this box set has the power to do; which is probably why it's been kept hidden from us for so long.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

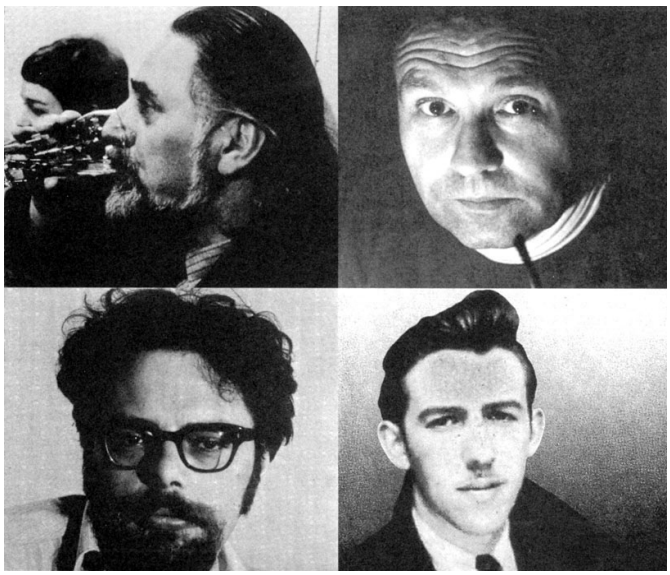
Emanuele Carcano, via Frapolli 40, 20133 Milan, Italy

algamarghen@iol.it

Additional notes

From Andrew Sclanders's book catalogues (he occasionally had copies of OU for sale) I gleaned that Revue OU was issued as card folders lined with cork, and wrap-around lithographed covers. The contents were loose-leaved inserts of various formats, with 10-inch LPs which played at 33 1/3 rpm. The 1960s issues were published at Sceaux by the Seine, but issue 42-43-44 was issued in Ingatestone in the UK. Sometimes a few copies of the LP were sold separately from the magazine.

Alga Marghen reissued some work of Henri Chopin as picture discs in the 1990s, though also see the 2001 and 2002 CDs Audio Poemes and La Peur and Co from ? Records in Cologne; and Le Corpsbis and Co from the Italian label Nepless, which we reviewed in issue 3 of TSP.



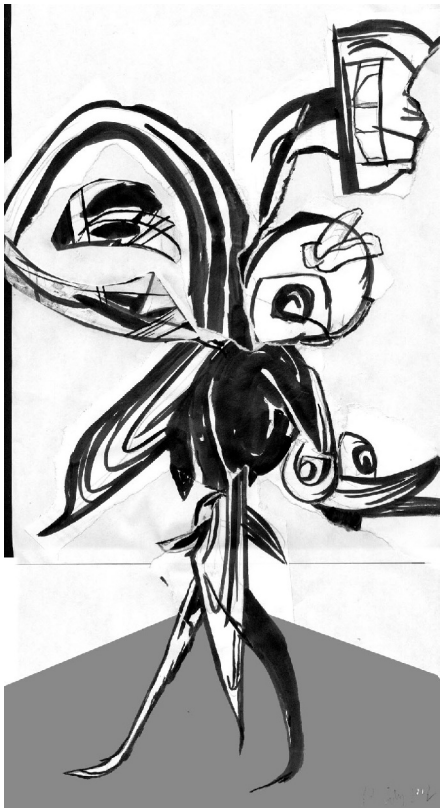
The D-R-O-NING Ones ⊙⊙⊙

WHY FEAR THE ULTIMATE COMBAT WITH ENEMIES NOT YET BEHELD? TAKE MEDICATION FROM THE PURRING OF MECHANICAL CATS, ROBOT MONSTERS AND LIVE GOLDFISH MOTORS

Ian Nagoski

Effortless Battle

USA RECORDED 010 CD (2003)



American writer and musician, who has not a few parallels with Alan Licht (see elsewhere), Nagoski too has written for Halana magazine, that excellent but sometimes ultra-precious organ of avant music, most notably contributing his interview with La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, granted after Nagoski had been living with them as houseboy for some time. Nagoski has even contributed to this magazine, with his fine interview with Donald Miller in issue 8. Nagoski (to his credit) is not quite as prolific nor ubiquitous as Licht, or even Jim O'Rourke. And in fact this record of his is a damnably good effort too. There's a single 31-minute drone piece which kicks off the CD and is, frankly, terrifyingly awesome; it was composed for a video by artist Catherine Pancake in 2002. With a name like that, you gotta believe she walks the streets of Brooklyn covered head to foot in crispy batter. Stranger things have been noted. 'Effortless Battle' starts off with a harmless 'fluttering' drone, as though listener's lower body half is caressed by butterfly wings, this long drone gradually seeps out a thick resinous eminence like tar that insinuates itself into your core. Rather than experiencing a sound which makes itself heard, it's more like being invaded by unseen germs or infections. Good wiry minimalism; CD continues in like vein. After some 5-6 minutes, Nagoski gets into some serious 'throbbing' as his electronic penis begins to swell and grow in stature and size. He brings in some slightly troubling chords on top of the pulsing madness, generating a dangerous drone...it's done with digital feedback and lots of source material which he can't ever repeat in quite the same way, as his master tapes and discs got stolen from his car one night. (I understand this precious booty is now available on the black market and highly craved by junkie wastrels and reprobates who can't afford to buy drugs, but need a trip as intense as something you get from speedball-ecstasy heroin-hash bars, and by golly this music is just the stuff to do it). By the 15 minute mark, the sound is becoming lethal...more layers are fed in by team of mad scientists, the slow and deliberate pace of it becomes numbing, and the comforting tonal centre which we started out with has vanished...you get that sick, vertiginous feeling like when you're far too drunk or you smoked too many cigarettes, and the floor is just dropping away from you. A shimmering power-pack of transcendental beauty is this 'Effortless Battle', a major minimo-electro statement. Buy it and play it as loud and often as you fucking can.

'Ripped Steam Hinterland' is an additional cut at 14 minutes, using the Wild Wave instrument of Daniel Conrad. This device seemingly involves a vibrating metal plate, which appears to my fevered brain as something both sexually perverse, and akin to the Brion Gyson 'Dream Machine', a flimsy self-assembly paper device which junkies and weirdoes who subscribed to art magazines which published it could use to hypnotise their sick selves, when they'd run out of hard drugs and wanted some other mind-bending experience to relieve their jaded existence. Nagoski uses the Wild Wave to deliver more of the same pulsing, pounding dronery...but with a more enjoyable helicopter-ride sensation than the life-or-death drama contained in the long track. Put it this way, at least I didn't need to phone an ambulance after playing this cut. Released on the very hip Baltimore label that also provides an outlet for music from the High Zero festival.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

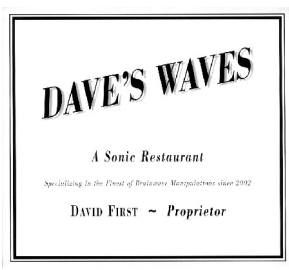
2732 St Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21218, USA
www.recorded.com

David First

Dave's Waves

ITALY ANTS ANT09CDR CD (2003)

Major ear-damaging monotonous noise ahoy! Here's four horrendously powerful ultra drone-works from American composer and sometime guitarist David First. This collection presents itself as a 'sonic restaurant' and the sleeve notes describe each recording as an item on a menu - a light-hearted conceit but, yikes! - the noises that leap out of the disc and fill up your room are little short of murderous. In no time at all, you're enveloped...to listen is like being suffocated alive. The resonating frequencies start to throb and vibrate right inside your skull, and are physically demanding (at times painful even) to listen to. Each one is edited to last precisely 19:33 each, and are generated using varying frequencies of kilohertz. You get a full spectrum of deep and high ranges of noise, forming into vibrant, invasive missiles of dronery that embed themselves in your cranium and manipulate the electronic signals of your brain, Whether this will have a benign result or a malignant one, only time will tell...composer devoutly wishes for the former, though.



In keeping with the jocular spirit of his restaurant theme, David First has arranged for photographs depicting the

interior of his imaginary sound-eatery. One table per customer is the order of the day; a Discman and headphones await you to begin your 'meal'. The outside window of said eatery has name of establishment over a sine-wave motif. The four 'cuts' are designated with whimsical titles - 'Cross-eyed luck', 'Closet Earth', 'Queen Siesta' and 'Harebrainer', and their capsuled descriptions lovingly detail the methods used in their preparation, as though describing delectable cuisine...eg, 'a full-bodied ring modulated, delayed and pitch shifted sine wave'..'feedback tweaked to our own patented secret methods that have been in the family for generations'. Ha, comma, ha.

More seriously, numerous references are made to the 'Schumann Resonance' which is equivalent to the fundamental resonant frequency of the Earth's magnetic field. Clearly no slouch when it comes to understanding physics and their relationship to human anatomy, David First makes frequent connections between his music and such things as the human pulse rate, brain waves (which are electrical impulses anyway), deep sleep rhythms, the subconscious, intuition and so forth, and has persuaded himself of the beneficial qualities of listening to drones that are loud and long: some of these include 'relaxation', 'expanded awareness', 'a heightened sense of creativity', and 'healing and regeneration'. No doubt that La Monte Young. who attributes his long and healthy creative life to living with an electronic drone 24-7 in his Dream House, would heartily agree - before debating whether to issue a copyright lawsuit, that is. In fact other more knowledgeable folk are already comparing these pieces to Young's pioneering electronic dronework Drift Study. David First knows all about this area and is indeed something of a veteran, having played for a year with the Cecil Taylor Ensemble (1973-74), and he formed an influential guitar-noise band called The Notekillers who were active around 1977-1981. I say influential because they were one of the (many) things Thurston Moore used as a template for building Sonic Youth. Much as I've enjoyed this 'sonic feast' of his, it isn't actually a complete well-balanced meal (ie no starters or dessert), consisting only of four main entrees. Perhaps his next release will be called Dave's Sweet Trolley. I know for sure I'll be ordering up a slice or two of that cream cake!

ED PINSENT 11-2003

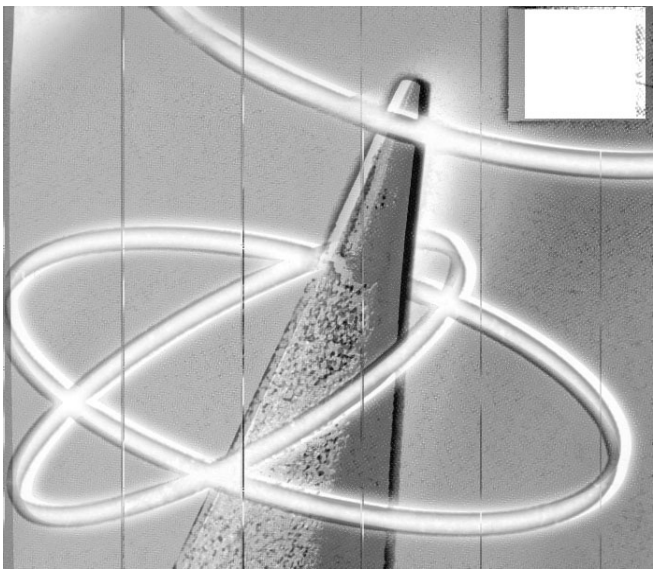
Via Filippo de Grenet, 26-00128, Rome, Italy
ants.rec@silenzio-distribuzione.it
www.silenzio-distribuzione.it/ants

Textu

Rizer

GREECE ANTIFROST AFRO 2018 CD (2003)

A great 'in the room' droner, produced via processing of recordings of a cello and live electronics in a church in Athens. With its lively heart rate, this living breathing piece of deep dronery is like a speeded-up version of Organum, although nowhere near as complex as Jackman's legendary scraping works, yet still brimming with richly resonant tones, plenty of rebounding natural echo from (I hope) the bare whitewashed walls of that holy shrine; and of course the rich invigorating buzz that comes from all that cello bowing action. One listen, and you will as intoxicated as if you had sipped many tumblers of the finest Hellenic brandy. Nikos Veliotis sawed the cello, and Coti K plugged himself in for the electronics and recording. Really, this can't be improved on for purity of approach, and high satisfaction factor derived from finished effect.



ED PINSENT 10-2003

www.antifrost.gr

Nöel Akchoté

Perpetual Joseph

FRANCE RECTANGLE REC AL2 CD (2003)

Simple enough on paper; four very basic and utterly static feedback drones delivered to your doorstep in around 40 minutes. If only all plumbers were as reliable as this, then the world would be a happier place - toilets would flush happily in musical unison, taking a shower would confer a golden skin to cover our nakedness, and sea pollution would be a thing of the past. I believe that if Nöel Akchoté were a plumber, he'd be a great one - gleaming white bathrooms would be our legacy, stretching in a line from Grenoble to Petaluma. He even turns up when he says he will. Amazingly, this record is all realised with an electric guitar and an amplifier, so it's droning feedback, very intensely controlled, but not with a mixing desk - Nöel uses his bare hands to master that current of electrified ether and fashions it into good music as surely as woodcarver can turn the heart of a beech tree into a useful wooden bowl. Where first two outings are fairly simple uneventful episodes of fascinating monotony, by track 3 there is some very minimal 'playing' of the guitar discernible - perhaps rocking the neck of the instrument back and forth in his mitts, touching the strings while wearing big fleecy gloves, or brushing lightly against the selector switch. But even so, these interventions do little to disturb the serene harmonic fields of white perfection, resembling the mirror-smooth surface of a mountain lake. Track 4 builds on that intervening approach - he sets up a repetitive rhythmical bouncing effect, possibly batting the instrument like a playful cougar would toy with its prey. Along with the slightly grittier feedback, this track stands out like a Jimi Hendrix tribute next to the ultra-minimal approach of remainder, and is totally mesmerising. Try to reach for your CD remote, and you can't - your hand is paralysed. It's the CD you can't turn off! Interestingly, among his list of those to whom CD is dedicated, are both Luc Ferrari and the two members of Suicide. This is but a single nod in the direction of this guitarist's illustrious career - he's appeared on over 200 records, and with many of the great names in noise, improv, jazz, industrial and weirdness musics which we all know and love. Allegedly this release is the last part in the 'Joseph' trilogy, a reference point that is a handle for Akchoté's oblique underpinning philosophy. 'There is no idea of progress,' he muses, 'neither of improvement, in between the three solos. It's just time passing in front of someone's feet.' You've only got to play this to realise how true that is.

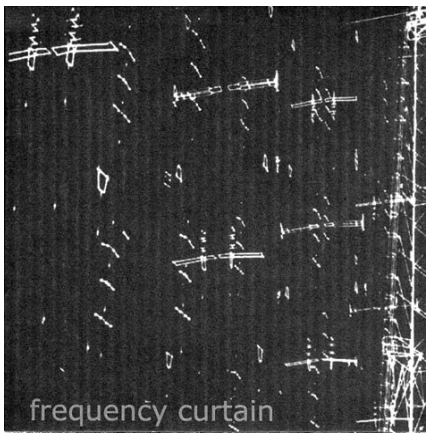
ED PINSENT 11-2003

info@rectangle.org
www.rectangle.org

Birchville Cat Motel

We Count These Prayers ...

NEW ZEALAND CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES 037 CD (2001)



A not very remarkable and quite monotonous album of static droney soundscapes is this offering from BCM. We um, kick off with the laidback 'another miners light' which sounds like a really drawn-out introduction (it may very well be, considering the track titles) with repetitive and monotonous guitar strumming and suitably industrial noises suggesting creaking chains lowering the miner into the deep shaft. We continue this idea with 'slow vehicle bay' which has a more lush if melancholy and resigned musical arrangement: long drawn out tones suggest a very deep subterranean mine or vast spaces within the earth. The title track 'we count these prayers (as they are recited)' features delicate, slightly echoing metallic tones as if someone was strumming an all-metal acoustic guitar; beautiful and serene though this piece is, in the context of the recording I think it should have had a fuller, more complex musical development incorporating a gradual change in mood. The fourth track 'lazy bones digger' instead has to bear the (I presume) burden of the downward spiral into tragedy; unfortunately it's very short, the mood seems neutral as if someone was expecting to die or expecting to find a body and the drilling echoes are monotonous. The final piece 'shapeshifter' - do you see what the titles hint at? - feature a toy instrument and floaty high-pitched electronic drones, suggesting a spirit or spirits drifting through the mine while the creaking trucks continue to trundle slowly over the tracks. The violin-like background noise and the nondescript tones give this track a fatalistic air.

None of these tracks develops very much beyond establishing a rhythm and mood that continue for the whole length of each track with variations in detail, and as a result the CD as a whole seems underdone. If there is a theme or idea behind the recording, it is insubstantial and the CD does not have a sense of unity. Still, there's enough nice if not very edgy music for the drone enthusiasts among you to while away a quiet afternoon.

JENNIFER HOR

hcorp@clear.net.nz

Frequency Curtain

Frequency Curtain

USA ELEVATOR BATH EEAOA09 CD (2002)

Four very good layered drone works, each loud, long and immensely satisfying. Josh Ronsen, John Griznich and Rick Reed played laptops, shortwave radios and tone generators and recorded their outpourings in Austin Texas in the summer of 2001, to achieve these chasmic hummings from outer space. There are clearly many strata of overdubs and strands of divergent thought which have fed into creating these dense electronic patterns; there's an awful lot to listen to, inside what appears at first to be an unscalable monolith of noise. Each piece has tremendous power and drive. Even the titles are good, such as 'Snake Eyes Lament' and 'Onset of Instability'. Hopefully, everything here was arrived at by semi-scientific methods, given the background of Griznich and perhaps his collaborators also. A good one.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 211501, Bedford, Texas 76095-8501, USA
eeaoa@elevatorbath.com
www.elevatorbath.com

Garai Ákos

Til Ødslig Horisont

HUNGARY NO LABEL NO NUMBER CD-R (2003)

A fabulous piece of droning and chiming minimalism from this unknown Hungarian solo turn. May appear through unassuming volume level to be gentle, but it's very tough and wiry in its structure and discipline. Til Ødslig Horisont rings out for some 40 minutes with soothing, seeping and throbbing tones, all executed with the delicate light touch of a goldsmith. Jets of escaping gas, light machinery works humming, conjuring up a miniature ride through a modernistic underground robot chamber. Beyond this, we seem to glimpse tall steely mountains, a view of infinite horizons. Spacious, musical, mysterious. At 20 paces, you'd be forgiven for mistaking this for 'Ambient' music of some nine years ago, and though probably composed inside a computer it still has warmth and depth, and much more substance than any so-called Ambient dronery of yore. There's discipline in the composition of it, the deliberate limitation of available sounds, and its uncanny effect of suggesting ever-forward motion yet allowing the listener to remain seated inside a core of stillness and peace. Near the end of this mental maze, we seem to be lost in a cavern of chill winds for ten minutes, while snowflakes of sound glisten all around us. A simple, magical experience.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

Bartok Bela Ut 75, 1114 Budapest, Hungary
skog@mail.tvnet.hu

EA

11'00

GERMANY DRONE RECORDS DR-53 7" VINYL SINGLE (2002)

A little 7-inch single pressed in clear vinyl from my favourite Polish drone-electro-acoustic art project. It's an effective mixture of water-based field recordings (everything from oceans, rivers, sewers, drains and kitchen sinks, as it might be) with vaguely doomy, portentous high-blown electro moanings. Echoed guitar or other metallic objects scraping are stirred into the mix in huge chunks. Ship's bells, and doomed foghorns in the distance. If sounds truly had colours, this would be a distinctive 'burnt umber' styled drone, the colour one attaches to the timbers of wrecked hulks or the planks of diseased merchant vessels. It must rank alongside 'Not Waving But Drowning' by This Heat as another great 'lost at sea' anthem. A genre of which we need more examples. The B side may be a continuation of the same piece, or may not be...it feels like the same scene from A side, revisited many hours later...where by now the black waters are shrouded in a heavy fog, and a gothic atmosphere hangs over everything...as such, this music would suit those admirers of Nosferatu the Vampyre, who often travel on themed holidays in an antique sailing ship, crossing the ocean while sleeping in a coffin instead of the usual luxury cabin on offer. A glutinous, cloudy murk builds up, deep and muggy....a church organ mysteriously swells in and out of the darkness. The tension will become unbearable, even over this relatively short space of time, so watch those fingernails as you listen. In fact this little miniature repays closer study, as I sense there are some very complex sound events buried deep in this stratified assemblage of information...you'll need a pick and shovel to dig them out.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Bohnenstrasse 14, 28203 Bremen, Germany

Svstriate

Stilled Life

USA GLARE.CON.ST/RUCTION GLARE04 CD-R (2003)

The latest CD-R release from my favourite USA-based marginal noise-emperor, Andrew Campbell. The first CD-R he ever sent me contained a sketch he'd made of a stag or reindeer wearing a Walkman. Continuing his theme of the gentle abuse of animals via noise, the cover to this release features a painting of a horse buried up its forelegs in a red desert. Given its placid expression, I'm glad to report the beast appears to be in no pain;

indeed, as a rare 'desert horse', it might deliberately adopt this comfortable position to shelter from the heat of the sun. Then again it might be an extremely rare cave-dwelling equine, emerging from its underground lair for the evening to take the air. Aye, this image presents a true conundrum - which same sentiment applies to this excellent CD. Svstriate has toned down the high volumes and loud roaring we associate with his previous releases, and upped the ante on the befuddlement factor. This means that average listener goes 'DUH?!' on first hearing. More fool Mr Average. The ten trax here segue together into a perfect 43-minute total statement, tracing an erratic course but following it with steady determination and tracing an obscure path which only the composer understands. The sound composition shows great attention to contrast - dramatic and unpredictable changes in timbre, attack, sound pattern, texture, and overall direction are the watchwords here. What you hear are strange, soaring drones, layers of white noise and interference, vague and barely noticeable field recordings, and documentary evidence of the musician himself turning switches, activating and de-activating machines, and moving around the room. I can't say why but this amounts to a wonderfully perplexing experience, where you are never sure what you are hearing, but are utterly enchanted with it nonetheless and cannot stop listening for a moment. As wild in its understated way as any of his 'jet engine' styled recordings, this quieter work constantly delights with its amorphous, shape-shifting, heavy-as-lead hummings, buzzes and clatterings.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

svstriate@con.st

Oren Ambarchi / Johan Berthling

My Days Are Longer Than Your Nights

SWEDEN HÄPNA H10 CD (2003)

Good thing these gentlemen aren't spruiking for travel agencies in Sweden or the country's tourism industry would be losing millions of kroner a year with a CD title like that! This all-drone affair on guitar and harmonium isn't much cheerier either: the overriding impression, especially close to the start, is one of melancholy, reflection and perhaps a longing for warmer, friendlier realms and longer hours of sunlight. Perhaps the music presses the gloom a little too much for all the subtle variations to be heard which means you need to hear this recording several times to really appreciate the on-going changes in the constant flow of drone. Early on, you can hear pulsations and a bit of choppiness in the sound. The texture gradually grows very rich from the mournful tone and becomes quite mellow at times. There's a possibility that some of you will find this recording quite spiritual and even very elevating emotionally (especially if you've been stuck in a mountain cabin for the whole of winter). In the last half of the piece the general tone lightens up and adopts a more hopeful and positive air: spring may not be so far off, the sun is beginning to appear above the horizon again and the snows will start to thaw and melt.

JENNIFER HOR

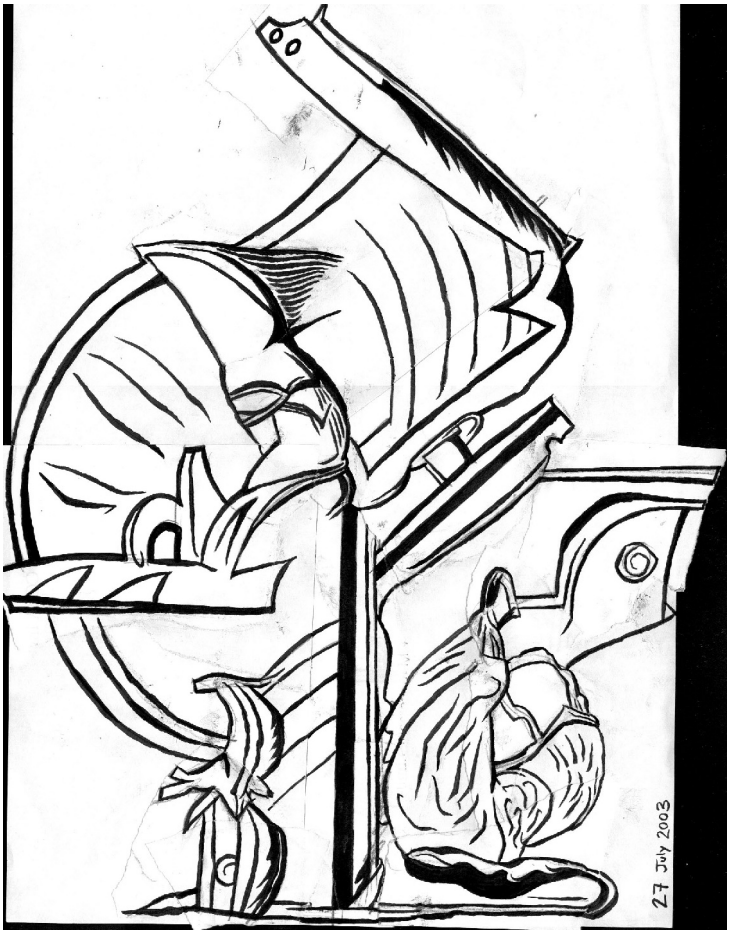
www.hapna.com
info@hapna.com

Polio

Concrete

NORWAY HUMBUG 023 CD-R (2003)

Three good long drones, put together by Christchurch-based underground veteran Peter Wright - noise guitarist, percussionist, and now computer buff, and he also started the famous cassette label kRkRkRk. His is a lengthy career which started in cassette bands and has worked its way through many aliases, solo projects and collaborations through the 1990s. Polio is his 'powerbook' routine, where he reprocesses original field recordings with his computer. This one is all very echo-ey and deep, perhaps reflecting its source materials. The original work was taped in the Lyttleton magazine, which is a deep underground chamber for storing ammunition (I assume this was in Fort Jervois, one of the 1886 forts built at Lyttleton harbour and one of the so-called 'Russian scare' forts, in which case Concrete is a most apt title). Of the three tracks, I like 'Enclave' for its lengthy duration which roots you to the spot like a yew tree, its rich resonant amplitude that is as filling as a rice pudding, and the fact that 'enclave' is such a good meaty word - however and by whomever it's used. But you may prefer 'Paradise Lost', with its sound of an aetherial space-wind blasting through the ruins of a nameless city. Perhaps someone has a copy of Sun Ra's My Brother The Wind and found a way to play it at 16 rpm. This kind of music is probably very easy to make and overall Concrete may not even be a particularly distinguished release, but it deserves mention because I know how much we all love a good drone. Some of my readers may even appreciate a good fort! Released by Anders Gjerde on his unassuming but very fine small-press Humbug label in Norway.



ED PINSENT 11-2003

Anders Gjerde, Bomloveien 20, N-4029, Stavanger, Norway

SMASHINGS, SLICINGS and MAD INVENTORS

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to smash it to pieces and slice off its legs with a chainsaw

Ekkehard Ehlers

Politik braucht keinen Feind

GERMANY STAUBGOLD
STAUBGOLD 41 CD (2003)

In the topsy-turvy, neo-colonial kind of world that we currently inhabit appearances can be deceiving and this CD is a perfect case in point. Judged by its black and white photo cover of various people presumably having it large, one may be forgiven for cringing at the thought of what may be lying in wait. Having braced myself for Happy House beats and synth basslines therefore, I was pleasantly surprised to find that this wasn't the case at all. What is contained within are three pieces, the first two spread over several tracks, consisting of bass clarinet and cello recordings which Ehlers then cuts and pastes on his laptop.

There is apparently more going on here conceptually than first meets the eye. Ehlers invokes the memory of September 11 no less, the front image of this CD being of a salubrious chap wearing a T-shirt that bares the image of the former twin towers. When you consider that the title of the CD is, by rough translation, 'Politic (?) Doesn't Need an Enemy' you start to get a sense of where Ehlers might be headed.

The first three tracks comprise a piece called 'Mäander', for bass clarinet; slow, breathy passages gradually become more haunting and expressive as they unfold. So far so good. The next piece, 'Blind' is spread over the following four tracks. This is a composition for cello quintet, although it would appear that the same person played the parts one after the other. Things again move along at a slow rate of knots, the pieces starting out quite fractured before gradually moving toward sustained tones. Both of these pieces Ehlers has presumably edited on his trusty computer but we are left to guess as to exactly what this involved, there being no real clue as to what form the initial recordings took and how much was involved in the process of manipulating them. Just how these pieces relate to the apparent political theme of the CD is also a puzzle. They are pleasant enough to listen to but there is nothing overtly referential about them.

The last piece and the last track on the CD, 'Woolf Phrase',is by far the longest at nearly twenty minutes, and the best thing here for my money. It appears to be having been composed for a performance by the Frankfurt Ballet, with choreography by William Forsythe. It's a dreamy piece for strings that revolves around a slowly evolving central motif, reminiscent of something an early Philip Glass might have done when he was still good. It performs a strange job of lulling you into a stupefied state and yet there is something vaguely unsettling about the whole experience, as if you were trapped inside a stuck record. It never quite resolves itself and the near-repetition becomes quite maddening after a while.

The process of digitally manipulating recordings seems to be fundamental to Ehlers'style of working. His previous releases, which also followed this format, were a set of vinyl EPs (collected on a CD last year by Staubgold) in which he paid homage to various artists: Albert Ayler, Robert Johnson, Cornelius Cardew, John Cassavetes and German Beat writer Hubert Fichte. Here he manipulated recordings from various sources, and has spoken of these as being based on the theme of digital art versus 'metacomplex' emotion. I thought my emotions were complex enough without there being anything 'meta' about them, but each to their own. Ehlers also seems to be interested in the theme of referencing historic ideas and places. Given that this dialectic seems to be central to his methodology, the lack of documentation of this process is frustrating. What we are left with is an end result without being privy to how he got there.

Ehlers seems a hard man to pin down. His first releases were on Mille Plateaux and he also co-fronts an electronic folk-pop act, März, with Albrecht Kunze. His latest works have been the 'Play' series mentioned earlier and this CD, where he seems to be branching out conceptually at least. What better way to top this than by providing a remix ('Californication') to the recent Chilli Peppers Greatest Hits album? An obvious next step if you ask me. One can only imagine what sort of California he has conjured up, although judging by this CD it is not one that the Terminator would be too keen on.

AARON ROBERTSON

Simplonstrasse 14, 10245 Berlin, Germany
welcome@staubgold.com
www.staubgold.com

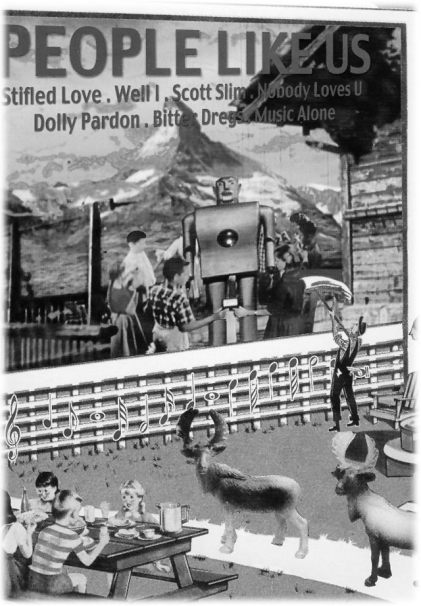
People Like Us

Stifled Love

USA MESS MEDIA MESS 2 VINYL LP (2002)

Latest release from People Like Us is a vinyl LP wrapped in a full-colour

sleeve of lurid intensity that PLU so richly deserves. The front cover features a vile Nancy Kominski-styled oil painting (a trick she's used before) populated by two plastic robots, and their pet cats. The back cover goes even further, collaging fragments from old family magazines in ways that subtly undermine the normality of ordinary life and add a nasty modernist taint to any feelings of nostalgia. All part of PLU's grand scheme, as is the normality-sapping music herein which shows some subtle developments and improvements on her usual work. The first side's four tracks are segued together neatly, but there's none of the normal restless jumping about from one sample to the next, no sendups of smug broadcasters on the radio (yet), and no silly jokes. Instead, it flows comparatively smoothly; there are samples of assorted singers who are continually cut off in mid-phrase by PLU's editing knife; the edits fall precisely at the moment before (or after) just as the singer is about to deliver their line, so all you hear are a series of gasps, grunts and breaths, all set to musical accompaniment. The effect is indeed one of 'stifled love'; the singers are continually being thwarted right at the moment of release, and can't get their meaning out or ever reach the emotional core of the song. This is being done to the recorded voices of Dolly Parton, Slim Whitman, Scott Walker, and other singers who I can't identify - all firmly placed in the Radio 2 camp - plus music from lounge jazz, easy listening strings, and other country and western singers. Now personally I'm not averse to Scott Walker, whose four solo LPs I regard as masterpieces of cathartic emotional release, but I'm prepared to go along with Vicki Bennet's agenda - she's making some point about blocked emotions and, perhaps, the human tragedies that may ensue from hiding your feelings. Clever work. The side ends rather bleakly, with the phrase 'Nobody Loves You' repeated in a loop.



Side two does have not a few Radio Four samples, so I guess I spoke too soon, but they are as usual cleverly juxtaposed to provide the well-timed verbal humour which only PLU can deliver (and it takes some craft to achieve, she says), effortlessly sending up the vapidity of media presenters. In any case I'm more impressed by the second cut 'Bitter Dregs', which pulls apart a quasi-folk song delivered as a 'warning' to young maidens and the perils of throwing their heart at the first man they meet. The male crooner's bland delivery (wonder who the singer was?) has been treated to make it ultra-queasy, the original recording slightly wobbling against an added instrumental track of bittersweet poignancy. Ironically, it's almost moving in a way its creator might not intend. This is followed by a saccharine children's song, whose lyrics have been doctored so they appear to sing 'We Will All Die'. This meditation on mortality ends with a return to her 'cowboy' theme, all home on the range and off-key yodelling, something which she's still getting out of her system ever since 2000's A Fistful Of Knuckles. In all, not a bad release and it's good she's still getting so much mileage from her unique methods.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 83296, Portland, Oregon 97283, USA

Vitamin B12

Two 10" Gatefold Set

ITALY ELICA 3VL-3708 2 x 10" LPs (2003)

Four sides of serious fun from the Vitamin B12, a solo turn based in Brighton UK. Broadly, he adopts two basic approaches here - one being the sort of jolly cut-ups that characterised the whole of an earlier self-released record, and two being a slightly more avant-ish approach to improvisation, composition and electronic music. The first mode finds the man more in his element, and a good proportion of the tracks on this set comprise cut-ups and remixes taken from (I assume) his extensive record collection of exotica, esoterica and other marginal musics; the assemblages he makes are always witty, ambiguous, and filled with twists and turns. You hear organs, bongos, brass, Cuban-styled percussion and liberal dashes of 'cheese'; his unerring ear picks the choicest musical moments, and produces winning combinations from his selections. There are also voice samples taken from movies and the usual 'kitsch' sources, which sometimes means he veers close to People Like Us territory, except he has no satiric intent whatsoever and simply wants the voices to add an extra touch of absurdity or bring a humourous full-stop to the piece. This kind of music will have you bopping around the room and bring an enormous smile to your face.

On the more avant experimental side, we have a piece for trombones called simply 'trombones', which is a slow atonal drone work; weird noise events; skittery solo improvisations, taped, edited and modified; tap manipulations, found mostly on side 2; and even a touch of sound poetry, such as 'Voice Mechanics' and the long piece which closes the record, 'Voice Mutilation', which shows more than a touch of the Henri Chopins. Somewhere in between these two approaches lies the wonderful world of side 3, a collection of 10 miniatures (some less than a minute long) which exist on the cusp between Residents-like instrumentals and soundtrack music - everything rendered in an attractive, home-made minimal style. They all have intriguing titles (buy it and find out for yourself) and if you saw a list like this pinned up on the art-school noticeboard and thought they were the titles of experimental pop-art films, you'd be competing like a monkey to see them first.

One of Vitamin B12's most approachable records yet, decorated in his trademark 4-way mandala patterns in sumptuous colours and shapes, and I'm please to note this is his third vinyl release this year, of which the other two are both full-length double LPs. Could the man be any more prolific?

ED PINSENT 12-2003

Andrea Cernotto, Via Arduino 97, 10015 Ivrea to. Italy

Philip Jeck

Host

BELGIUM SUB ROSA SR194 CD (2003)

Another splendid release from this unique British artist; this one his first I think for the Belgian Sub Rosa label, who commissioned it for their 'Between-Sounds' series of contemporary electronic music, noise, microsounds, and what-not. Jeck thus joins such distinguished company as David Toop, Derek Jarman, Carl Michael von Hausswolff, David Shea, Scannner and Lilith. The CD comes with three audio tracks and a video element, a 20 minute documentary of Jeck performing a live soundtrack, with Main's Robert Hampson, to an experimental film That's What She Wrote. Quite a sympatico bit of photography, even though the image wobbles badly in Real Player, it kind of adds to the experience.

The music here shows Jeck at his finest...there are plenty of the inexplicably sad and introspective moments we associate with releases like Surf, but also a lot more unruly and aggressive episodes where incredibly complex and dense layers of sound are built up. Working only with his turntables, old records, effects pedals and the occasional use of Casio sampling keyboard, he creates the effect of an entire alternative-orchestra. 'Community' makes quite aggressive statements with its deep, heavy sounds and the regular 'choppy' noise created by several stuck-groove records playing at once. 'Accomodation' (sic) likewise kicks off with a complex mixture of elements, allowing dozens of well-chosen moments from mis-playing records to pile up into a collision. The record of the huge choir - its vinyl surface clearly very distressed - is actually quite alarming in the way it distorts and shimmers. The mixing desk is very much to the fore as a compositional instrument; sounds comes in, fragment over the layers of noisy stuff, generating an

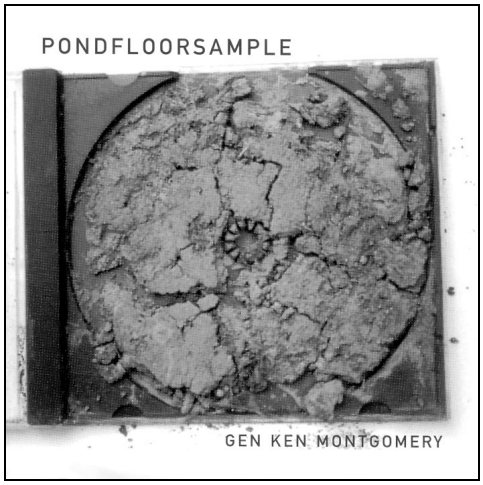
amazing roary effect. Several constantly changing loops all colliding at once. As usual, an unearthly sound results and stirs up deep emotions that are hard to name.

The long piece 'Skew', coming in at 24 minutes, is likewise quite an up-tempo 'number'. Jeck is on the top of his form here, intending to use his methodology to ask very pointed questions about the state of the world today, rather than muse gently on mankind's failings in a melancholic way. Starting off with a careful construction of tuneful looping and layers, Jeck builds totally unrelated fragments from disconnected records and forms from this collage a whole range of chords, patterns, and tunes... the skill, sensitivity and just plain getting-it-rightness that he exhibits shows the degree to whish he has mastered this totally unique craft. Then, around the 8-9 minute mark the piece shifts direction and starts to grow into something quite wild and strange...from here it shortly becomes an amazing symphonic noise - percussion thumping, heavy metal guitar effects, all shot through with the uncanny hoooo-rooaaar of slowed down singing voices, played at 16 rpm. I can't tell you how incredibly moving it all is. This man can't do anything wrong, in my book.

Philip Jeck is interviewed this issue.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

PO Box 808, CM 1000 Brussels, Belgium
guymarc@subrosa.net
www.subrosa.net



Gen Ken Montgomery

Pondfloorsample

USA XI RECORDS XI 126 2 x CD (2002)

This fine survey of recordings from the estimable Gen Ken would make the perfect introduction for any novice listener to the work of this genial and approachable sound-artist. Those more seriously bitten by the Gen Ken bug ought to write to him direct and invest in some of his many CD-Rs; but it is meet that the Experimental Intermedia Foundation (which also hosted some of the live events documented here) should raise the profile of this most urban and urbane of NY noiseicians. Two discs here, one comprising all studio recordings, the other one live performances and related works. The studio disc for the most part shows his pursuit of his abiding preoccupation with the sounds made by household objects, and there are some 15-16 short recordings of these - of which more in due course, but this disc is dominated by the 31-minute work 'Father Demo Swears', a huge and frankly sprawling tapestry of endless sound-weaving. From 1989, it was assembled inside the studio of famed David Lee Myers (aka Arcane Device), using the sounds of a live violin, voices, a microphone hanging outside the window and capturing whatever sounds it might, plus four cassettes of pre-recorded material playing simultaneously. What a noise! This gargantuan roar - the word 'dense' only begins to describe it - in unmistakably urban, with its celebration of city traffic, rattling, jangling and indistinct voices all soaring in the sky and colliding in a huge cloud of sonic mis-shapes. It sings of grey city roads, air pollution, crowded streets and over-filled silos of useless information. A love-letter to the weirdness and grandeur of NYC, 'Father Demo Swears' manages to be entirely realistic (due to large proportion of documentary sources) and yet quite fantastic and surreal at the same time.

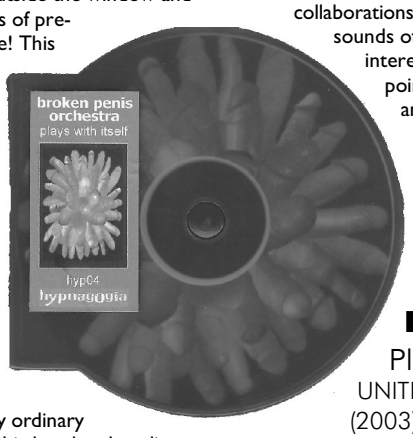
Thereafter we have the large collection of recordings selected from his extensive 'Domestic Release' series, which are unadulterated and raw documentary recordings of household objects, ranging from the very ordinary (fridges, radiators) to the slightly exotic (parrot eating birdseed and rattling cage). Also represented...his bath emptying, a fusebox, an eggslicer, a film projector, a film being rewound, and his ever-trusty laminator machine doing its thing. Most of these rely for their charm on the droning effects produced by small motors, whose musical properties continue to be celebrated by many others to this day. Has to be said, however, that structured composition isn't Gen Ken's strong suit; these short recorded fragments, while not uninteresting, are mostly shapeless blobs of texture which just start and stop for no reason. But does it matter? Some of the events, like 'bath drain', do have a natural end-point of their own that is satisfying; and what comes over is a picture of a man delighted by simple discoveries, almost on a daily basis. From his friendly, homey descriptions of each work (included at length in the booklet here - it's surprising how much he has to say about this stuff), you too can start to learn to see the world in a slightly different way, taking lessons from the anecdotes that surround each piece. Played end to end, the tracks here are like the day in the life of a mad inventor.

Second disc is dominated by another long and ponderous track, 'Droneskipclickloop'. This 1998 piece started life as a four-channel mixing desk experiment, with one-second samples triggered by a computer, but it evolved into a more elaborate and performative work with four CDs played back over loudspeakers, and a live collaboration with dancer Andrea Beeman (whose movements affect the playback). Starting off with a very open and nebulous jungle of sounds, it soon resolves itself into a narrow and focussed set of skipping electronic noise loops. Mesmeric. But does it need to be 52 minutes long? This is followed by another lengthy piece, the 19 minute 'Aquarium Fishtank Symphony', where a delirious set of drones and scrapes is conjured from the most unlikely array of junk ever deployed in the name of musical performance - including a sewing machine, an ice crushing machine, an aquarium pump and an eggbeater. Said it once before about Ken, but Marcel Duchamp would have been there at the 1708 Gallery in the front row applauding like a monkey. That said, it's another shapeless work, which would have sufficed at half its length.

It remains only to mention the intriguing cover art, which shows a CD case filled with dried sludge. This refers to a time when Gen Ken would take samples of gunk from the bottom of a pond - hence title - and put it in a cassette case with the date and time when he did it, seal it in a little bag, and send the whole mess to one of his many correspondents and collaborators (a true obsessive, Gen Ken has been doing home-made music since the 1970s and was a big guy on the tape trading scene). He notes that he always did this when he had no ideas for music, or couldn't think of anything else to do. This is a very intriguing solution to the creative blocks that blight the artist - cartoonist Glenn Dakin, when stuck for ideas, admitted he could do nothing else but doodle rocks in a desert. Widening out the debate, Gen Ken writes over two pages in his booklet describing aborted, failed or projected projects of his, which have so far come to nothing; all this to describe the 33-second track of complete silence which opens disc two. A hymn to nothing, which he dreams of being broadcast on the radio one day. But this should not suggest that Montgomery has some kind of nihilistic streak - rather, he appears to be one of the most engaged artists working today, as is evidenced from his many collaborations with friends and artists, his engagement with the sounds of the city around him, the continued attempts to wrest interesting sounds from small domestic objects...these all point to a man who's pretty much in love with the world and everything that's in it.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

PO Box 1754, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, USA
xirecords@compuserve.com
www.xirecords.org



Broken Penis Orchestra

Plays With Itself

UNITED KINGDOM HYPNAGOGIA HYP04 CD-R (2003)

A totally bonkers cut-up record...its jokey title and the abundance of plastic cocks on label of this CD-R might perhaps lead you to expect something else (though what I'm not exactly sure), when in fact this is a lively and entertaining 'art' piece, composed entirely of utterly fragmented samples - or as they would have it, 'recycled music'. Nearest thing I could compare it with would be the notorious Bladder Flask experiment (recently reissued), but this record is, if anything, far more stupid and abrasive in its relentless onslaught. No real developed 'ideas' as such, just a continual and perpetual

stream of rubbish heaped up in silly and meaningless collisions, and let the devil take the hindmost. Well, actually that's not true, because there is a discernible structure behind the apparent 'mayhem' that first greets your ears, if you can just get into it. Certainly a lot funkier (by which I mean very stinky) than some forays in this area, and has a certain vulgarity to it, which grows on you...mostly vulgarity in the silliness of the noises, some of which resemble blowing raspberries or farting...this record is like being teased by silly little children poking out their tongues at you. Or mocked by subnormal loons yawping and roaring and throwing their hands in the air. Unsettling in some ways. Quite an energetic attack is unleashed, particularly for the first 15 minutes...a warehouse full of samples, spewed out with little concern for any sense of linearity, unity, or simple good taste.

Originally issued a CD-R with a witty but sicko sleeve by PsychoChrist productions of Seattle, in very limited numbers, this 100-copy reissue enables a few more people to reconnect with that obscure project, whose perpetrator (it was conceived and directed by 'Srad Tene') had something to say about religious evangelism in the USA...a small section near the end of the first, long track contains much sneering at these hypocritical false prophets, or at least a total distortion of their 'messages' through tape-fuckery. Isn't this sort of thing a bit passé now? Still, the Tape Beatles still get away with it...at any rate the treatment of voices in this long track - called simply 'Broken part 1' - is particularly effective in the way it passes on feeling of alienation and disconnectedness. I was pleased to encounter not a single familiar record or recognisable music source in all of their cutting-up activity, and was musing gently on how I find I still don't have much time for John Oswald and his Plunderphonics. His work of singling out specific moments of recognisable music to reassemble is positively artistic in comparison to the Broken Penis Orchestra, who seem to treat everything as part of the same garbage pile, and regard it all as fair game for abuse (or self-abuse, judging by the title). Then I reached track three, which reminded me muchly of early Mothers of Invention records (the wild use of varispeed, for example) - and indeed bits of Lumpy Gravy itself are clearly audible in here, along with the Dick Kunc-created 'snork' sound. At one time this pilferage might have annoyed me, but here it sounds perfectly in synch with Zappa's original aims and contributes greatly to this record.

In all, the remorseless 'pile-it-on' approach of this record reminds me of a half-remembered passage in Gravity's Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon, where some guy is force-fed all kinds of exotic foodstuffs while blindfolded, and his mind reeling with the bizarre tastes and textures, hopes for the best...this music appears to be chaotic, but its deep programming strategy is evidence that it is far from formless. The more things they break and smash in their 'Broken' symphonies, the more patterns of thought they release. Very good.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

www.hypnagogia.org.uk
www.psychochrist.com

Xper Xr

… .. . …. ..
GOOD TIMES RECORDINGS GTRO 0532457 256 CD (2003)

Either a silly fun novelty record (and a one-joke record at that) or a statement of profound genius, or both...this deliberately kitschy release comprises a clutch of disco and dance songs, incongruously performed by a band of Chinese musicians playing mostly traditional Chinese instruments, souped-up with hyper-active beats and - erm - artistic direction by Xper Xr. The songs include 'Right on Time', 'No Limit', 'Chaka Khan', 'S-Express' and other selections of dancefloor shit from the 1970s and 1980s which I know nothing of. I can't work out exactly what's going on with the vocals, but it sounds like a Chinese singer who's been taught the vowel sounds phonetically and has no idea of the meaning (and I use the word loosely) of what's being sung. Either that, or somebody is striving hard to create this deliberately jarring and slightly embarrassing effect. A couple of Westerners - Simon Lucas and Freddie Decombe - assist with the singing, or maybe it's all done by Xper himself. I'm never sure what to make of this prankster from Hong Kong, whose records I studiously avoid and whom I cast in the same camp as Stock, Hausen and Walkman. But one has to admit this is a unique record, done with a fair amount of preparation and conviction, and not too much sniggering behind the scenes. Certainly, it sounds utterly bizarre - even without the vocals, the use of such traditional Eastern instruments as the Erhu, Jinghu, Yueqin, Daruan, Sona, Shun and Gugin (whatever they may be) in the service of this most Western and commercial of musical forms does more than raise an eyebrow or two. It goes a lot further in that direction of deliberate confusion than Ground-Zero's landmark reworking of Revolutionary Pekinese Opera.

The sleeve is also a kitschy masterpiece. Photographed by Sawa-San and with art by Lucas, Xper and Alasadair Duncan, the entire sleeve is over-printed with doodles in garish pink and hand-printed gloss effects by Andy Yuen. The photo sequence, spread over four sides of a gatefold, is highly intricate - it shows a sexy Asian babe (modelled by Heidi Osono) posing in a purple bikini against picture-postcard views of London. She's holding something edible in one hand which is dripping ketchup or jam down her front. All seems innocent enough (!) until you follow the narrative, which shows her grinning inanely while being punched in the face from off-camera. The final shot on back cover shows her lying face down next to a rubbish skip. Apart from 'hilarious' joke of shifting from these cliched tourist background shots (Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge etc) to this sordid back-alley setting, the skip itself is marked 'Golden Lotto' - which suggests it belongs to a Chinese restaurant. Plenty of loaded imagery there for all you semiologists to decode; the nasty violence-against-women motif is tasteless, but has some purpose. Clearly this, and the entire record, is saying something about the elision of cultural divides in the 21st century, how everything becomes Westernised eventually, and inevitably yields to the global invasion of monopoly capitalism.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

xper_xr@hotmail.com
www.xperxr.com

V/Vm and THEIR GENERAL ATROCITIES

Here we are again deep in the sick, sick world of V/VM, a semi-anonymous English collective of outlaws and maniacs dedicated to destroying everything we hold dear. Like all the best anti-artists, they do it by promoting the sickest, lamest and most banal elements of popular culture, elevating them to a mystical high status; and turning the very things we cherish against us. Everything they release is executed with the most virulent sneering sarcasm, that continually makes a mockery of the audience for being gullible enough to fall for their jokes, or simply being naive enough to even care about anything in the first place. Yep, it's a nasty no-win game these guys are playing, but in between the vulgar, childish pranks they do manage to realise some half-decent sounds...

V/Vm / Dimitri Shostakovich

The Missing Symphony

UNITED KINGDOM V/VM TEST RECORDS VVMTCD10 CD (2003)

...although this isn't one of those releases. This particular abomination was generated from sampling records of Shostakovich symphonies, layering them inside the laptop and then playing them all simultaneously. The 15 recordings, once in the laptop, were apparently time-stretched or compressed into an 'average' length; and to maintain consistency, they allegedly used recordings from the same orchestra. I endured this one-joke, one-dimensional flat record for as long as I could - all the charmless stridency and pomposity of classical music colliding into an indigestible mess in my stomach. So the target this time is the decadent, dead-on-its-feet yet heavily sponsored world of classical music, and the resulting cacophony is, one supposes naively, a brilliant send-up of the bourgeois audience who allow themselves to be force-fed this so-called high culture like so many cattle?

Well, maybe not. As one reads into the methodology here, and the phrases like 'surprise all expectations...a work which at this time is unique in its conception and execution...resultant piece of soundwork was only heard when completed and not at any stage of the process of its creation' you realise that their target is actually... experimental music itself. Clearly regarding most laptop or electronica artists - especially those who are pompous enough to regard themselves as modernist composers - as patent fraudsters, V/VM have gone for the jugular, spoofing the methods of these so-called experimental artists, and (most importantly) sending up the pretentious language such phonies use to justify their vapid activities. The master-stroke thus lies not in the execution of The Missing Symphony, but in the wording of the press release for it; a booby-trap just waiting for any journalist unwary enough to fall for it. The recorded experiment that you listen to (assuming you're prepared to even do that) is merely an adjunct to this clever little game, a sitting-duck decoy. The main clue is when they sniggeringly declare that 'each symphony was ...reduced in volume to 6.66% of its original volume...6.66% was 100% volume divided by the fifteen symphonies,' a ploy to explain how they avoided distortion in the final product. Apart from the fact that to speak of 'reducing volume' in this way is totally meaningless claptrap, the 666 code is clearly an in-joke to plant the 'Number of The Beast' in this text, and implying, I suppose, that they regard the entire corrupt music industry as the work of the devil. Anyway sorry to blow your cover guys, but you gotta get up early in the morning...if you wanna ream Dimitri Shostakovich.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

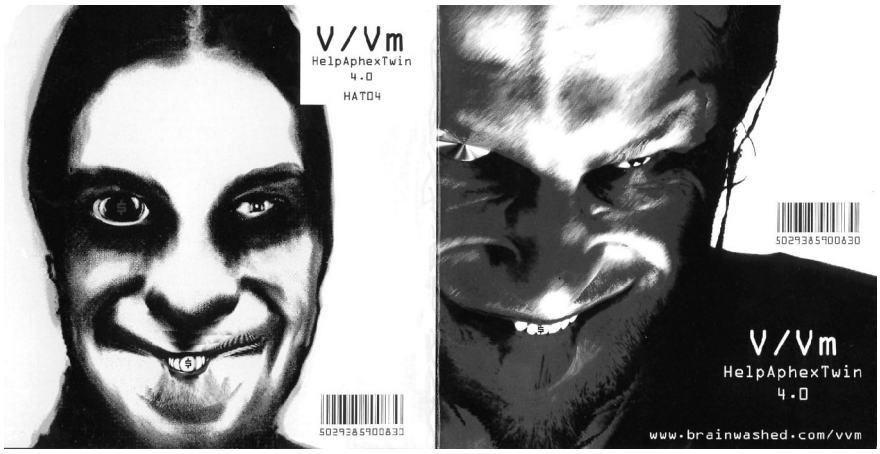
V/Vm

HelpAphexTwin 4.0

UNITED KINGDOM V/VM TEST RECORDS HAT04 CD (2003)

V/vm Help Aphex Twin is more successful, where they're back on ground with an area of music they understand. This attack on electronica and remix star Richard James - amounting to something like a personal vendetta - was originally issued as a series of 12-inch singles and mini CDs. Now spread over 20 tracks you can own the entire collection on a single CD. As a listening experience, it's a great non-stop noise, but certainly not one for the faint-hearted. Man, it's brutal. They perform all their usual 'twisting' methods to distort original records into grotesque parodies of their original selves - ear-splittingly loud volumes, massive distortion, cut-ups and jarring edits, mixing several records together at once, speeding up and slowing down, skipping CDs, and all manner of mayhem guaranteed to repel the sensitive listener. A vaguely menacing ambience is created, as though you find yourself in a grim crowded nightclub where you're in danger of being beaten up at any moment; the beer is stale, the drugs are dangerous, the lighting is bad, and the music simply sounds diseased. This is a far more intense onslaught against 'real' music than V/VM have managed before; their previous efforts, largely directed against Top 20 radio and the crassest of crass novelty records, now seem quite twee in comparison to this dangerous racket. It veers wildly along at 100mph speeds, and in the same way that the Matrix franchise movies verge on the unwatchable, this hyper-edit gibberish verges on the unlistenable.

So, how does this parodic tirade unleash the dark psyche of Richard James? I'm not the guy to ask, as I'm largely unfamiliar with the work of the Aphex Twin - this CD may even be an improvement on his music for all I know. Richard James seems to me such an obvious target for their bile, I don't know why they bothered - he's virtually a sitting duck. James is pictured here with subliminal dollar-signs in his teeth



and his eyes; while in between the deconstructions of his original records, V/VM throw in assorted 'money' themed songs. These jibes blatantly express their view that James is a rapacious, unprincipled bread-head of the first water. They equally resent his remix work, that symbiotic part of contemporary pop music business where James (or any other big name) delivers a not-very different version of a faceless dance track, gets his name (which by this point is little more than a brand name anyway) featured on the release, and thus gets large dollops of money falling into his lap -all in exchange for very little work. That's such a commonplace feature of remix culture now. It was inevitable that greedy record companies would want to jump on that bandwagon. It makes economic sense - generates twice the product for half the effort! By ruthlessly targeting one of its major patsys, V/VM are striking a blow and unleashing their venom at the conglomerate of big corporations that is the music industry.

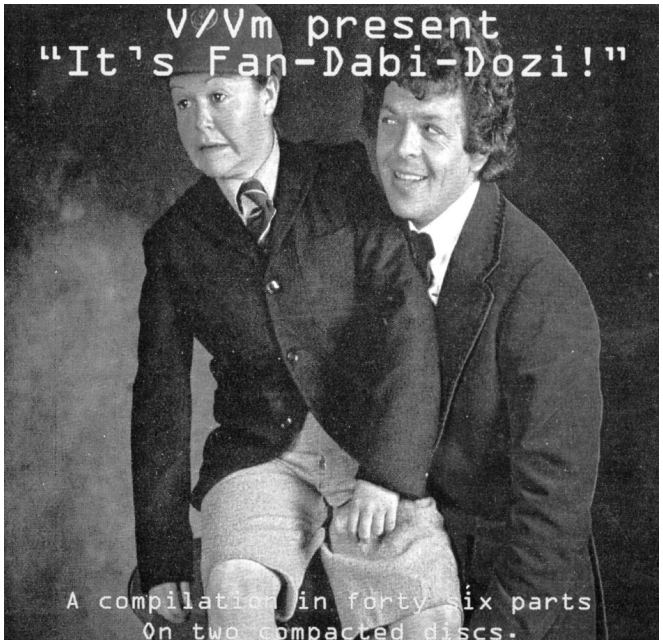
ED PINSENT 11-2003

Various Artists

V/Vm present "It's Fan-Dabi-Dozi!"

UNITED KINGDOM V/VM TEST RECORDS OFFAL 13 2 x CD (2003)

This one is an overwhelming compilation of mind-warping insanity. I haven't dared played the entire thing in total end-to-end, for fear of permanently eradicating vital brain cells, but I have sampled all the tracks and even so came out of that experience nearly reduced to a gibbering wreck. On this sprawling double-CD, V/Vm compile anything and everything - selections of ultra-kitsch music scraped from the very bottom of the barrel of charity shop finds; vile, hyper-intense electronic noisefests; sarcastic re-workings of pop records; and some 'genuine' examples of outsider music, gathered from the four corners of the globe's furthest reaches of amateur or mentally-ill music. As to which of these approaches yields the more tooth-grindingly excruciating listening experience, you must decide for yourself. Your toes won't simply curl up - they'll turn into pretzels.



The Krankies - who have been used as cover-star emblems to frame this horrible onslaught - were one of the most frankly terrifying phenomena ever to have appeared on television in the name of popular entertainment. A Scottish middle-aged husband-and-wife comedy duo, of which the diminutive female half of the act would pretend to be a ten year-old schoolboy, The Krankies are remembered with a ghastly shudder by everyone I meet of my generation who ever saw them on Crackerjack. Even a Scottish colleague at work felt compelled to apologise on behalf of her homeland for them! They are about the closest the BBC ever came to subjecting innocent minds to a carnival freak show. To experience the utter naffness of their brand of comedy, go thou to the title track of this CD (a comedy kiddie's disco song, heavens preserve us) and recoil in loathing. With this abomination, V/Vm set the scene for the horror-show that's to follow.

In singling out the lamest, 10th-rate copyist losers who ever wound up releasing a record, V/Vm hope to call attention to the utter vapidity and banality of the modern music 'scene' as it stands today; they clearly regard the music business as a bloated, putrid corpse, and to remind us of this fact they intend to push our face right into it and force us to smell its rotten flesh. Untreated tracks by such non-entities as Fast Lady, Andy Calorie, and Madame Chao (if indeed these are the genuine article and not malicious 'fakes') are such mistaken, ill-judged abominations in the name of popular music that these parts of the comp are like an art gallery of thrift store paintings and karaoke competitions from hell. Don't question what you hear....just take it head-on and let your brain suffer the consequences. Tracks like 'This must be Hawaiian Love' by Sir Augustus Holmes or 'Sticklebrick' by Isnasakenai Douji appear to be similar kitsch, but adulterated by the V/Vm mincing-machine. V/Vm's own contributions to disc one - including 'The one armed drummer from Deff Leppard' - are simply all-out noise assaults, tempering the relentless saccharine-laced-with-arsenic theme of other tracks. The exercise so far reeks of brilliant, ruthless vulgarity.

That's the first disc, but the second is even more nightmarish and I can't even begin to describe the evil horror of it...going beyond mere sarcasm, we enter a more violent and grim world of chaotic mayhem, peeling away layers of normality to expose the twisted nature of our collective psyche. The cuts by Fraugham, Suicidal Rap Orgy, Rank Sinatra and Vagina Jones take the biscuit for sheer gratuitous nastiness; Suicidal Rap Orgy have a full-length CD of their extreme horror-show rapping on Dual Plover, the Australian label run by Lucas Abela. Lucas had a hand in compiling this monstrosity, along with Animal (ie Andrew McGregor), and American noise meister Emil [Beaulieu]. There's more noise workouts on this disc too, such as those by Appliancide, Evoldopa, and Cock ESP, but now they're far darker and wilder. Meanwhile the opening cut by Animal and the track by [.Kozuo] exhibit the most irritating and insufferable sarcasm imaginable; the only human response is to save yourself and shut it off.

In addition, there are further examples of their 'slaughterhouse' approach to reworking versions of hit pop songs, a technique familiar from their back catalogue. But somehow now they've made it even more intense - meaning louder, faster, more distorted and more completely pointless - in such ways that eclipse even their own previous efforts. Like everything else on this release, this is an obsessive attempt to hammer the meaning out of anything, and yet it's entirely coherent according to its own anti-aesthetic; totally rooted in club culture (the more extreme end of it), this lot celebrate the joys of being vulgar, loud-mouthed idiots, completely pissed all the time and bopping like Neanderthals along to mindless, fast, nasty noise. Outside of the slightly quieter and more surreal moments, such as Preston and Spartanite's 'Live at the Walton Hop', this record is like getting a broken beerglass shoved in your face. It makes virtually no sense whatsoever. Listen now - you have nothing to lose but your brains.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.brainwashed.com/vvm

NEW WORLD RECORDS

Music From The ONCE Festival 1961-1966

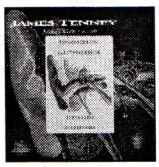
Robert Ashley, George Cacioppo, Gordon Mumma, Roger Reynolds, Donald Scavarda, David Behrman, George Crevoshay, Philip Krumm, Pauline Oliveros, Robert Sheff, Bruce Wise

80567-2 (5 CDs)

A major slice of ONCE's rich musical legacy—35 works constituting six hours of music—is presented here, almost all for the first time. This landmark set, the most comprehensive document ever released of this legendary event, is an opportunity for anyone interested in contemporary music to hear history in the making. Included in the set is a 140-page booklet with a lengthy scholarly essay and numerous rare photos of ONCE personages and performances.

80570-2

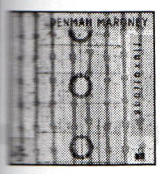
James Tenney



Selected Works 1961-1969

Reissue of Tenney's seminal computer music works originally issued on Artifact Records.

80607-2



Denman Maroney

Fluxations

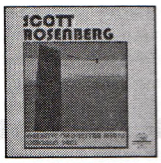
Denman Maroney, hyperpiano; Dave Ballou, trumpet; Ned Rothenberg, bass clarinet, alto sax; Mark Dresser, bass; Kevin Norton, drums, vibraphone

80572-2

Scott Rosenberg

Creative Orchestra Music, Chicago 2001

Rosenberg conducts a 26-piece ensemble in six compositions that incorporate elements of improvisation, including conducted improvisations in some sections.



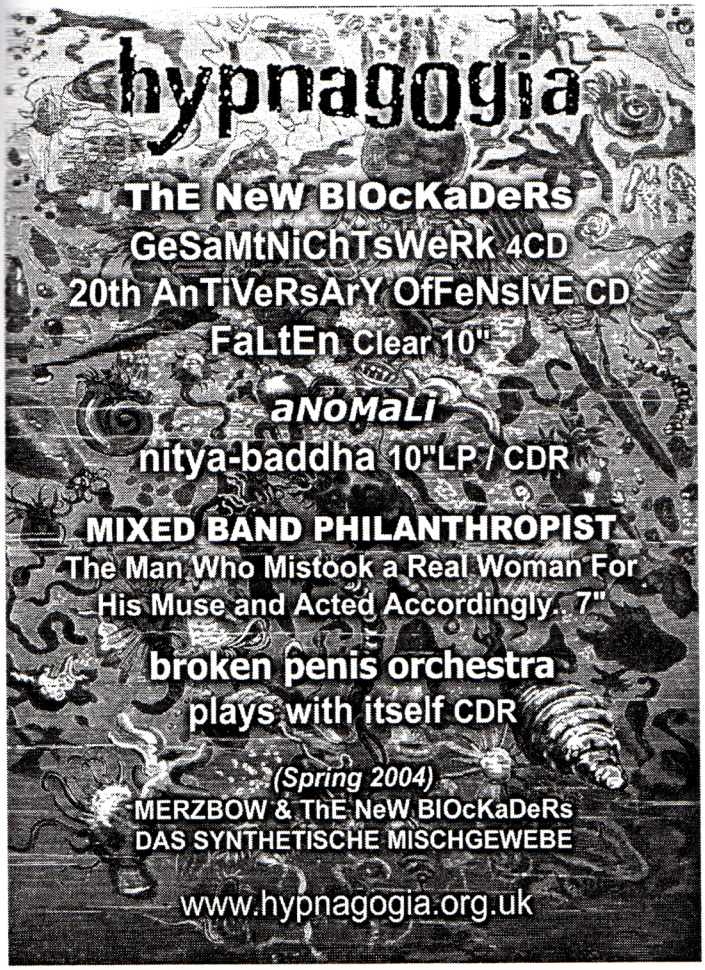
COMING THIS SPRING: 80612-2 (2 CDs) **James Tenney** **Postal Pieces** *The Barton Workshop, James Fulkerson, director*

For easy and convenient online shopping, please visit our website:

www.newworldrecords.org

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SPECIAL OFFERS!

New World Records
16 Penn Plaza, #835, New York, NY, 10001-1820
(Tel) 212-290-1680 (Fax) 212-290-1685
Email: info@newworldrecords.org



SPARKS

Sparks
Lil' Beethoven
ARTFUL RECORDS CD LILBCD2 (2002)

Sparks
Live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, 21st March 2003

Like many others who grew up in the UK during the 1970s I was both terrified and fascinated as a child by Sparks (and in particular the malevolent stare of the moustachioed Ron Mael). How had Adolf Hitler cheated death and ended up playing keyboards on Top of the Pops without anyone noticing? Two decades or so on from their last UK hit and Sparks have accumulated a huge but largely unappreciated body of work. This latest release sees them ditching their usual working methods (dumping an LP's worth of near-completed tunes in the process) and attempting to put together an 'aggressive' pop record without resort to the standard foundation of drums and rhythm guitar. And sure enough Lil' Beethoven sounds nothing like anyone, let alone any version of Sparks that you're likely to have heard before.

The delicate and intricate tunes here are only a step or so more complex than, say, Moondog compositions and just as memorable and singular. The main elements are all introduced within the first few bars, and from then on it's all in the mixing - the different tracks are faded in, out, and generally shaken all about, which somehow creates the impression of a traditional song structure without there actually being one. It also frees up the Maels to switch from operatic bombast to pastoral plaintiveness and back again without warning. There may be no drum-generated beat as such but there's no lack of urgency – bad tempered piano riffs, string stabs, and other weapons in Ron Mael's synth arsenal all pushing the record along.

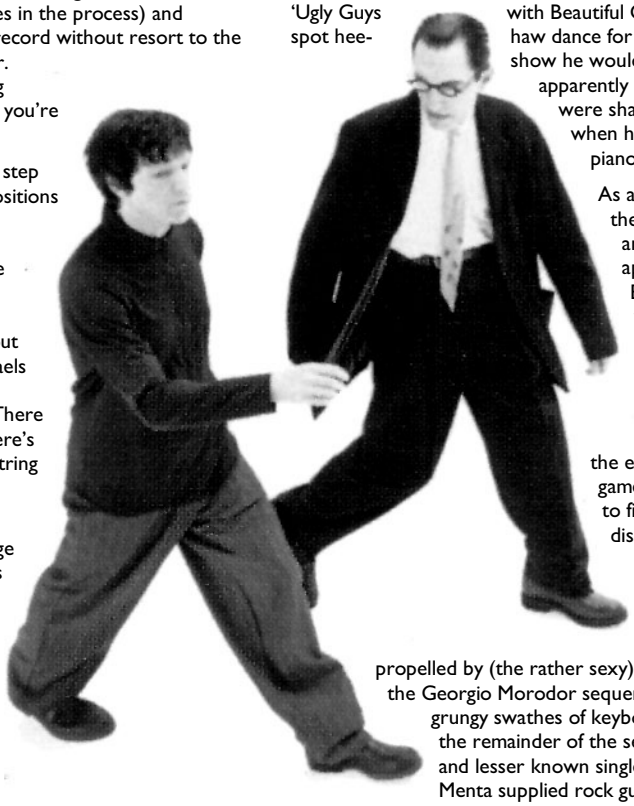
The record's undeniably insistent and manic edge is compounded by alarming multi-tracked voices and minimal lyrics. Single phrases are used like samples and repeated over and over almost to the point of irritation, etching their way into your head instantly. The economy of expression here is remarkable: in just a few lines 'The Rhythm Thief' manages to announce the Sparks' new working method ('Oh no! Where did the groove go?'), set up an absurd dramatic scenario with several implied characters, and predict (by about six months at the time of LB's release) the recent mainstream swing from dance back to rock music.

Elsewhere the subject matter is easier to pin down than the denser, more obtuse, songs for which they're most famous, taking the ostensible form of light satire on familiar aspects of modern life (self obsession, call centres, pseudo-rebellious rock groups, wiggas, etc), expressed with a certain weary perspective perhaps borne of age and experience - 'Ugly Guys with Beautiful Girls' for one is a strangely winning cross between a Daily Mail editorial and a Robert Crumb 'Troubles with Women' comic strip. But as you'd hope, Sparks avoid tired and obvious satirical options, making their points via rhetorical questions and sometimes tangential responses ('How do I get to Carnegie Hall? Practice man, practice!'), an approach which leaves the listener to fill in the gaps and gives the songs extra teeth.

That the music and words here are intrinsically linked can be heard plainly in the purest realisation of the band's new approach: 'My Baby's Taking Me Home' (perhaps not coincidentally the best track). This repeats the title again and again whilst the music rapidly shifts moods, suggesting a wide range of contexts for the words (romantic wistfulness, sinister foreboding, determined resolve, etc) and in the process investing an otherwise empty phrase with dramatic and emotional content.

Rightly confident in their new record, they gave track-by-track performances of the entire LP in two shows at the South Bank, the second of which I was lucky enough to attend. A huge stage set had their backing band perched atop a balcony over a set of arches filled with a giant video screens. Presumably having decided that the record was too complex or challenging to stage live, Sparks sang and played along to a backing tape of the LP, an approach which, to be honest, locked their band into too much of a predetermined structure and made their token live contributions (a kettle drum roll here, a xylophone solo there) pretty much redundant.

On the up side however it did allow the boys to indulge in some visual comedy, with Ron Mael taking any opportunity to make an incongruous divergence from his 'straight man' image; interacting with the video screens; parading around with a stereotype blonde on his arms during 'Ugly Guys with Beautiful Girls; and doing a ridiculous on-the-spot hee-haw dance for 'Ride 'Em Cowboy'. (Later in the show he would crack up the audience with an apparently quite genuine tap dance). And there were shades of Vic Reeves' Big Night Out when he donned six-foot-long arms for the piano part in 'Carnegie Hall'.



As a side note, The Residents had played the same venue a few weeks before, and a couple of parallels became apparent during the Sparks show. Both bands obsessively base all their visuals on a single image – in The Residents' case it's their eyeball heads, in Sparks it's Ron Mael's spooky Charlie Chaplin meets Adolf H visage. And both bands seemed a little lost on the enormous RFH stage, Russell Mael gamely running about and trying to try to fill it, looking in his hooded top like a disorientated jogger.

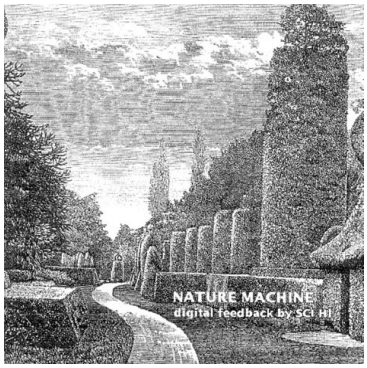
I have to admit that I enjoyed the all-live second half of the show a lot more. It kicked off with a fantastic, driving, 'Number 1 Song in Heaven' propelled by (the rather sexy) Tammy Glover's drumming, with the Georgio Morodor sequencing of the original replaced with grungy swathes of keyboard noise. This set the pace for the remainder of the set, a joyous run through of their hits and lesser known singles. Faith No More guitarist Dean Menta supplied rock guitar where necessary but otherwise Sparks was a pared down unit, sounding like a synthed-up garage band, stripping everything down to the basics and knocking it out with effortless conviction.

Lil' Beethoven has rightly received good press and has no doubt awakened many to their continued existence and vitality, as well as confirming them as musicians who shouldn't be ignored. Towards the end of the second RFH gig, Russell Mael happily announced that the band had been signed to Chris Blackwell's Palm label. Blackwell apparently believes that 'The Rhythm Thief' has the makings of a chart hit and could be the way to get the band back in the charts. But it seems that he's been thwarted during 2003 by the unwillingness of any DJs to give it radio play - perhaps a rude awakening for someone who has spotted a hit or two in a different era. For what it's worth 'The Rhythm Thief' failed the background music test at my workplace: the subtleties just don't come across at all at low volume, and the repetition just becomes annoying. But who ever said radio play was the measure of anything? Lights out Ibiza!

HARLEY RICHARDSON

Eden Gully

FOUR MODEST CD-RS FROM PAUL WINSTANLEY IN NEW ZEALAND - OR AS WE SHOULD SAY AOTEAROA. NOTHING MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT THE MAN, DESPITE AN EXTENSIVE INTERVIEW IN AN AMERICAN MAGAZINE WHICH REVEALED VERY LITTLE ABOUT HIS LIFE AND CAREER IN THAT COUNTRY. THESE APPEAR TO BE MOSTLY SOLO PROJECTS BY WINSTANLEY, UNDER VARIOUS GUISES, SOMETIMES WITH ASSISTANCE. FURTHER LUCIDITY IS SHED BY MINI-INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN, BELOW.



Sci Hi

Nature Machine: Digital Feedback

NEW ZEALAND EDEN GULLY 002 CD-R (2002)

Nature Machine is entirely produced by digital feedback, and compared with Toshimaru Nakamura who limits himself to straining small amounts of high-pitched feedback through an extremely narrow opening, Sci Hi's approach is positively profligate. The squealing noise whistles up and down the entire register, shoots off the end of the scale and comes rolling down the other side. There is no melody, rhythm or pattern whatsoever - simply random sounds flowing continuously like blobs of mercury sliding down a Teflon surface. You'll quite possibly be intrigued for ten minutes, but unfortunately the novelty tends to wear off. This was recorded live in Auckland in September 2002 and uses no overdubs.

Paul 9

Exotica

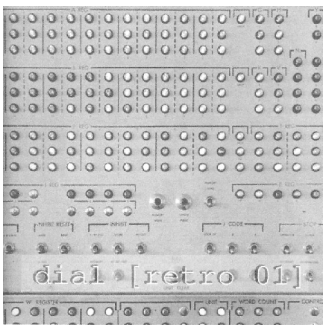
NEW ZEALAND EDEN GULLY 004 CD-R (ND)

Exotica is marginally more exciting. Paul 9, as he styles himself for this release, played the electric bass but used midi equipment to make it trigger his Roland MKS 20. So instead of a bass, it sounds more like synthesised bells or vibes. The effect is more percussive than anything, not far away from a computerised version of Conlon Nancarrow. Again, 13 tracks of this sort of noodling is more than you need, but at least there's a bit more variety than the one above. The tracks are given poetic zen-like titles full of simple pastoral imagery: 'Pebble obscuring the mountain', 'Watching geese', and 'Saluting the frog'. Charming touch, but still not quite exotic enough.

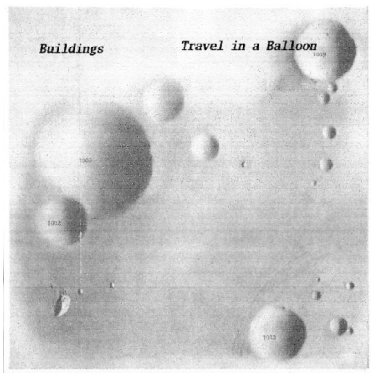
Dial

Retro 01

NEW ZEALAND EDEN GULLY 001 CD-R (2001)



Retro 01, by Dial, comprises three live performances by a shortwave radio group. The first one, 'bfm', is a long piece of extremely dense noise that could have been recorded in some lazy youth hostel with the TV playing somewhere in the living room. This made me think (mistakenly) that this was a field recording, but no - it is all 'performed' and intended in some way. Numerous frequencies battle with each other for space on the recording tape, until eventually it builds up into a raincloud of noisy activity. David Tudor and John Cage would not disapprove. Presumably very simple to produce and surprisingly effective - I for one find this kind of chuntering quite compelling to listen to, in the right circumstances. The other two tracks were recorded at (I assume) poky little venues in Wellington and New Plymouth. '99.9' is filled with muffled voices, echoing corridors and distant traffic roaring. 'Solid Energy' appears to be shortwave and more muffled voices. It's surprising how much rough chaotic beauty has been generated from such simple sources interacting with the right kind of environment.



Buildings

Travel in a Balloon

NEW ZEALAND EDEN GULLY 006 CD-R (2001)

Travel in a Balloon is probably the best of the four here. It seems to be by a band called Buildings, and if sleeve can be believed it's a trio of i-net, ryn rak and f. keyes. A CD of electronics and samples, this entirely instrumental CD combines simple, amorphous synth playing with occasional indistinct field recordings; in places, it gets quite haunting and oddly moving, conveying an extremely isolated and lonely feeling. Indeed the listener is suspended in the air, like floating in a balloon across the lunar surface depicted on front cover. Not far away from one of Brian Eno's soundtracks, or perhaps some undiscovered German electronica from the 1970s; but extremely low-key and fragile, like a guttering candle that's in danger of being snuffed out at any moment.

PAUL WINSTANLEY MINI-INTERVIEW

EP *Travel in a balloon* is a very good one, but who are the members of Buildings? Are they a group, or is it a solo record?

PW Though I'm the only performer I still consider Ryn Rak, who made the all the samples, to be an equal contributor to the overall sound. When Ryn was replacing his S-330 for a newer model he insisted I buy it and in the bargain I inherited a stack of his old floppy disc samples. I used only those samples for about a year and the very nature of them determines the atmosphere and flow of *Travel*.

EP How was *Travel in a balloon* made? Seems to be a mixture of field recordings and electronics, is that right?

PW Samples triggered by a bass guitar with a midi pickup are blended with a Korg MS10, an occasional turntable and microphones placed outside the studio. Everything is being put through an effects processor. The tracks are constructed from a series of 2 track recordings that were made over the course of several days. For the most part the recordings are reproduced as played and not overdubbed.

EP Who are the members of Dial?

PW Dial could be described as the radio ensemble of David Merritt. Intially it was just David and myself but it's since expanded to include others. For example, Pseudoarcana, a local CDR label have released a recording of a more recent Dial performance that features 5 players.

EP On *Retro 01*, what on earth is going on?

PW *Retro [01]* comes from live recordings made during Dial's 2001 tour of New Zealand's North Island. A total of 2 dates. Dave plays transistor and shortwave radios exclusively and I play a mixture of turntable, synth and amplified radios. On one track I'm amplifying a pair of mics placed outside the venue to the point of feedback inside the room.

EP On *Exotica*, why add those curious titles? Are they taken from something else, like a book of Chinese watercolour paintings? Are they intended to match the music?

PW There's a homogenous feel to the pieces on *Exotica* so I thought I'd apply a series of titles with a partially unified theme but with enough memorable character to assist track identification. The method of creation involved a series of directed mis-triggerings and glitches on the bass, so in effect each piece is an accumulation of organically developed zen accidents. I thought the naturalistic titles of buddhist art quite fitting and hoped they would complement the musical results. Whether they do or not is a different matter.

EP All the records you sent have a kind of outsider quality...they all sound a bit isolated. Why do you suppose that is?

PW I'm not sure what you mean by isolated. In a musical sense? I approach the instruments and equipment I'm using from an exploratory angle without trying to consciously mimic anybody else's sound or sound structure. And since I'm not trying to associate myself with any obvious existing genre, national or otherwise, I suppose the results come across as individual.

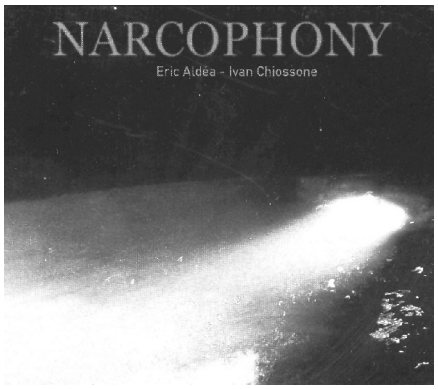
EP Can you describe what motivates you to create music?

PW I'm more interested in performance than recording, hence the CDs are more by-products of those performances. *Heaven on earth* (my first CD) and *Water regions of the Southwest USA* (released by the wholly other label in 1997) are the only discs that employ multitracking. Everything since has been more-or-less a document of a real-time sound event. The challenge for me seems to be overcoming the physical barrier of getting the instruments / equipment / sound-makers to produce a unique and personally satisfying result. Organise. Rehearse. Do it again.

In addition, Paul later sent new CD-Rs - Kaukapakapa by Dial, Live Space 23.7.00 by Audible 3, and a new one by Sci Hi called Who Trusts Crucible? Crucible Trusts No-One. Haven't heard 'em yet.

PO Box 68735, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand
edengully@yahoo.com

The DISCURATOR'S DEN



Eric Aldea and Ivan Chiossone

Narcophony

FRANCE 0101 0101.05 CD (2003)

There is something a little sinister about the sight of this CD sitting on the shelf. The cardboard slipcover immediately suggestive of a thousand nightmares that you secretly thought you had left far behind with the sandman. It may be no surprise then that it was initially intended as a reworking of Nurse with Wound's spooky 1986 classic 'Spiral Insana'. Aldea widened his sonic net when he had what seems to be a portentous meeting with Ivan Chiossone. The result is something that is informed by much of the spirit of that record, summoning up an ominous Lynchian landscape of unseen threat, yet still managing to make a place to call its very own. Hurriedly consulting the dictionary to decipher the neologism, I became only slightly more worried when I realised what was contained within may be the very sound of insensibility itself.

The first five tracks combine to form an extended piece called 'Petit Buddha'. One of the immediately noticeable things is that it's full of dynamics; in western music at least the most underused and misunderstood of musical devices. Here they're handled well: the music building and trailing away (and building again) in quite a beautiful manner. The co-conspirators, with the help of a host of players, achieve a nice balance of traditional instrumentation and electronic soundscape throughout the album, something that helps to give this piece especially a 'filmic' quality.

The next piece 'Leo' is credited solely to Chiossone and is somewhat different from the first. It's a sort of twisted world music that isn't faithful to any particular tradition but fuses various instruments into something bordering on the exotic. This could be bad I hear you saying. Yes it could but it's actually rather enjoyable. It would sit comfortably as part of Howard Shore's aural imagining of Interzone, especially with its use of the oud, and that particular soundtrack need I remind you has Ornette all over it. Case rested. The last track here especially, 'Hasmig', combines strings and pure electronic tones in a subtle way to form a piece that manages to hint at minimalism throughout yet still be very melodic at the same time, a task that has proved the bane of many a composer no doubt, before spiralling down to a sudden conclusion.

So not too insensible at all really, dreamy maybe yes, I will give you that. Aldea's path so far has taken a few twists and turns, starting off with the industrial hardcore of Deity Guns (1992s 'Trans Lines Appointment' produced by a certain Mr. Ranaldo), then the post-rock of Bästard (a couple of ex-members also show up on this CD), and now a solo career that sees him operating somewhere between digital and acoustic composition. This is apparently the first outing on disc for Chiossone although you would never guess it.

AARON ROBERTSON

32 bis rue Raymond Poincaré, 54000 Nancy, France
0101@icidailleurs.com

УХОДЯЩИЕ ВДАЛЬ ТЕЛЕГРАФНЫЕ СТОЛБЫ СТАНОВЯТСЯ ВСЁ МЕНЬШЕ И МЕНЬШЕ

The Moglass

Telegraph Poles are getting smaller and smaller as the distance grows

UKRAINE NEXSOUND RECORDS NS 12 CD (2003)

Highly singular - very wonderful half-mad trio from the Ukraine, playing guitar, bass and electronics. Recommended to all music lovers who constantly dream of a fantasy-1970s era when records were made the way they should be, in analogue studios with valve amplifiers, and mixing desks made of green cheese...The Moglass record could easily have emerged from that golden era, with its richly old-fashioned sound. And it's not just the analogue squeaks and tortured blat emanating from the synths, or the excessive use of the Watkins Copycat echo chamber, desirable though these goodies be. It's the very up-frontness of the recording, as though they were all gathered round the same suspension mic - everything is mixed with that extra 'loudness', suggesting real solid presence. This approach goes hand in glove with their superb combo playing - a lot of humanity and warmth in their actions together, even as they set out to describe the harshest and coldest regions of man's bleak psychological landscape. They have several successful modes of playing - a kind of meandering moaniness of ominous drones and minimal chord structures, worthy of the best moments of 1970s Tangerine Dream; machine-like rhythms, celebrating the dark lyricism of the 20th century piston-driven machine; a spacey, angular methodology where they can truly listen to each other and bounce simple phrases off the wall into oblivion; and, when they're fully on, an intensity of strumming activity from the guitarist who occasionally goes into a fury of mad, repeating patterns, possessed like some cyborg Cossack dancer. Go to the third track for a sterling example of this - the guitarist throws out near-random stabs of light against a chundering, chugging bass riff that's exactly like a defective train engine. At the end everyone goes berserk - here's playing that has a real force to it, and a near-obsessive need to burn something out of their systems. The dynamic propels the music, propels the listener, throughout full length of CD; you're making that voyage along the long road depicted on front cover, living out the 'truth' of that telegraph-pole title...it's like the music of Artemeyev, who composed soundtracks for film-maker Tarkovsky. This CD is a series of exciting and invigorating rides into strange forbidden zones, carried along in a small cart on metal tracks. 'Deals with space, motion and transformation,' is their compacted description of their efforts, adding 'rail' and 'Paul Bowles books' to the shopping list of desired effects. The label is home to another of their releases, whose title I can't translate; plus a band called Kotra, a solo act called Alphonse de Montroyd, and a compilation called Polyvox Populi. Worth clicking onto Nexsound website and scarfing up a bunch of these exotic sweetmeats, all of which look inviting morsels.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

PO Box 1739, Khrakov 61204, Ukraine
ak@nexsound.org
www.nexsound.org
For a CD tribute to Tarkovsky, see the electro-acoustic section.

Sagor and Swing

Orgelfärger

SWEDEN HÄPNA H5 CD (2001)

An unassuming CD of eleven short pieces of melody performed by Eric Malmberg and Ulf Möller playing organ/moog and drums respectively. The tunes are all quite simple, as in clear, easy to follow and ingenuous in delivery, and repetitive with a regular pace and very little development of each piece, yet with a more varied range of mood than might be expected from a limited choice of instruments and a plain style of performance; the range of mood tends however to be in the dark and mellow part of the emotional territory. The musicians may not necessarily aspire to the heights of Charlemagne Palestine when he's tickling the ivories but the naive quality of their playing and the sparing production may strike some listeners as almost spiritual. The titles are also very plain (almost too much so): 'Melodi' is one such title, 'Andra melodin' is another and we also have 'Ett tva tre fyr' which is Swedish for '1 2 3 4' - yes, our friends Malmberg and Möller seem very much the shy and retiring types here. Even at their brightest on 'Ett tva ...', there's still a plaintive quality to the organ music despite the brisk marching percussion-set pace. After a while, the lack of passion and the static nature of the music become apparent but as the CD is short (about 30 minutes), I guess we can forgive the duo for these limitations. Orgelfärger is the kind of uncomplicated music that helps to unwind you after a long, hard day or a heavy session of mind-blowing offerings from extreme noise nutheads and the tunes are of the sort that reverberate in your head for a long, long time long after you have got rid of the CD because eventually you absorb all that you need or want from it and you are ready for some really spiritual and passionate organ music. Then again, after hearing that kind of music and looking for something to wind you down to normal life again ...

JENNIFER HOR

www.hapna.com
info@hapna.com

Greg Kingston and Will Guthrie

Hills Hoist

AUSTRALIA ANTBOY 02 3" CD (2003)

Recorded live at the aptly named Make It Up Club in Melbourne with instruments and equipment not necessarily preferred by the two performers, this modest little number turns in an enjoyable performance. Kingston and Guthrie grapple with found music recordings, toys, guitar, percussion and bad amplification, and emerge smiling with sense of humour intact. TSP readers outside Australia may be surprised to learn Kingston has Tourette's syndrome as his guitar-playing is very fluid in the first track, though there are passages where he appears to play in an out-of-control way in an ironic reference to his situation. The music throughout this recording is quick and light with lots of short pauses and it's not easy at times to tell the two musicians apart. All of a sudden, the next thing you know is the applause, then your player starts its familiar whirl and you realise twenty minutes have gone in a flash. Just like that.

JENNIFER HOR

www.antboy.com

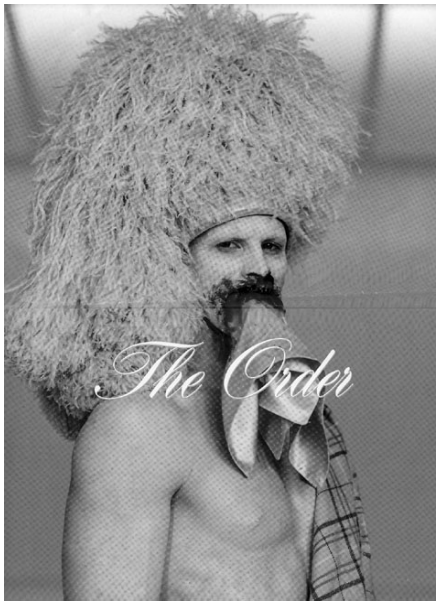
Jonathan Bepler

Music for Matthew Barney's Cremaster 3

USA JONATHAN BEPLER JB002 2 x CD (2002)

Not having seen any of the movies in Matthew Barney's 5-part Cremaster series may possibly qualify me more than otherwise to say that this Cremaster 3 music soundtrack is consistently good enough to stand as a work of art in its own right. By turns eccentric, downright weird and alien, full of whimsy, beautiful and coming close to kitsch at times, the music certainly hints at the complexity of the movie it's associated with.

Most tracks stand out in some way that's



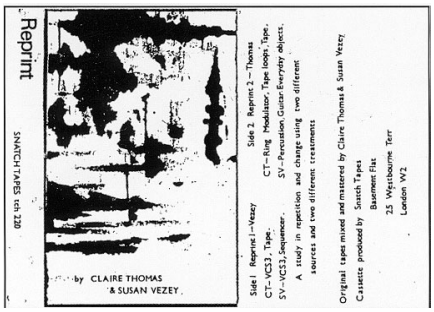
different from the rest of the double set. 'Giants Prologue' features some strange garbled singing from Bepler himself. This piece and 'Giants Epilogue' correspond to scenes in the movie set in Fingal's Cave on Staffa Island in Scotland and on the famous Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland: the latter is a basalt formation associated with a story about the Irish mythical hero Finn MacCool in which he is disguised as a baby in a cot. A giant who's out to get him sees him in the cot, imagines that such a big bubby must have a pretty formidable dad called Finn MacCool, panics and runs off; the movie and soundtrack allude to this story. (More prosaically, the Giant's Causeway was the setting 30 years ago for the cover of Led Zeppelin's Houses of the Holy. Did I have to toss that piece of trivia in? Oh yeah.) On some tracks, the theremin is featured: what hauntingly eerie sounds it brings forth, what strange and deep feelings it calls up! - on 'Chrysler Chorale Overture' it's like the wail of a long-forgotten banshee. Elsewhere we have real Irish music (not pretend Irish pop as in U2 or the Corrs) in the form of a sprightly jig in 'Cloud Club Reel', performed with traditional Irish instruments, and in Paul Brady singing Irish Gaelic lyrics on 'Song of the Vertical Field': these two tracks plus the very affecting 'Initiate's Serenade' (performed on piano and theremin) are among the highlights of the entire recording. I quite like 'Rough Ashler' for its brief noisy metal bit.

As the music progresses, it tends to become less distinctive and not quite so interesting or lively. Tracks 3 and 4 on Disc 2 feature an unusual but actually very effective mix of traditional Irish instruments playing martial marching music and orchestral / big brass band backing with Paul Brady singing, this time in English. The near-kitschy part comes with 'Rainbow Girls Idyll', featuring a lush, almost 1940s-era big band production with what appears to be massed tap dancing (for the movie's purposes). After this track, the CD abruptly switches to 'Giants Epilogue' and the Gaelic setting so I suspect that some music from the movie didn't make it to the CD soundtrack. [Editor's note - in fact, that's how the film ends - with a return to Fingall's cave].

Of the musicians featured on this soundtrack, Zeena Parkins who plays harp on some pieces will be known to a number of TSP readers and Algis Kizys of Swans fame gets a credit too. Bepler himself plays a number of percussion instruments and contributes some vocals. The styles of music featured on the soundtrack and the ways in which they are combined are unusual though relevant to the themes and plot of the movie, and acquire a strong flavour as a result of the juxtaposition; the Gaelic-influenced music in particular is sure to make a strong impression on listeners with their lively and expressive melodies. A booklet with gorgeous photographs of scenes from the movie (scenes which give the impression of a strongly visual and stylistic film with much symbolism that works on many aesthetic and intellectual levels) accompanies the soundtrack. Even if you have not seen the movie or don't plan to see it (it clocks at 180 minutes), you will find at least a few pieces in the soundtrack that are enjoyable in their own right.

A brief outline of the movie is as follows: a mason called 'The Entered Apprentice' played by Matthew Barney works his way up the elevator shafts of the Chrysler Building in New York City towards the Chamber of the Great Architect, said architect being Hiram Abiff, played by Richard Serra (I think Serra is an architect in real life). The main character commits acts of sabotage and encounters a number of obstacles including the Order of the Rainbow for Girls which appears to be an all-female tap dancing troupe dressed in bunny suits. Gaelic mythology and a creature that is half-cheetah / half-woman also feature in the movie which explain previous references to locations in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Other locations in the movie include the Guggenheim Museum in NYC and the Saratoga racetrack in upstate New York.

I don't know what the other 4 movies in the Cremaster series may be about though they do have linked themes. I know Cremaster 2 involves a story about the serial criminal Gary Gilmore on the run in Utah and takes in locations in that state and western Canada; I did have the soundtrack for a while but I have to admit I can't stand country and western music and there was quite a bit of that. Ex-Slayer man Dave Lombardo's duelling drum duet with a hive of hundreds of thousands of bees just didn't last long enough for me (for him it was probably too



long), and Patty Griffin singing with Morbid Angel's Steve Tucker sounded kind of unbalanced, his singing was just so deep.

JENNIFER HOR

www.jonathanbepler.com

Philip Sanderson

Reprint

USA ANOMALOUS RECORDS NOM23 CD (2003)

A little slice of history from the days of independent cassettes, a piece of home experimental music by a UK artist now reissued on CD by this American label. When originally issued in 1980, Reprint fooled buyers into thinking it was recorded by two girls Claire Thomas and Susan Vezey, when all along it was a solo turn by a guy Philip Sanderson. Actually probably nobody was fooled by this ruse, since the Snatch Tapes label was fairly well established by this point and its founder Sanderson was one half of the irrepressible Storm Bugs combo, and most of the audience would have spotted this 'in joke'. Although the history of all this is explained in the CD notes, nobody sees fit to make any comment on the wider question - ie why don't more women and girls make experimental music? I don't have the answer, by the way, but I thought I'd mention it. Perhaps the question was implicit in Sanderson's package. He certainly saw fit to make use of a girl's voice on the first track 'Bright Waves', where the voice of a girl named Nancy is sampled and, simply by using tape delay, transformed into an ethereal sea of echoing beauty, like twinkling lights on the ocean. On 'Nein Nein Nein' he's joined by Steven Ball, the other half of Storm Bugs, on guitar and percussion, while Sanderson amuses himself with his Sythi-Bug and ring modulator. The rest of it he realised using the VCS3 and tape delay; 'Reprint One'; and 'Reprint Two' use the synthesiser to create a simple sequence of notes, which are then built up using the tape delay into a fairly dense construction. Although the music isn't very dynamic, nor does it change much, it is incredibly simple and economic both is composition and realisation, and the results are very pleasant to listen to. I guess releases like this is what made the cassette scene so exciting; recorded cheaply, issued cheaply, and made available to an audience on a budget of zero while for the most part by-passing the complexities and tribulations of starting your own record label, or worse, joining a major one. That said, I think Snatch Tapes - also home to David Jackman recordings - was one of the significant players in the arena. The original photocopy and Letraset sleeve to the cassette is reproduced on the back cover, while this issue has new cover art. A useful CD.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

PO Box 22195, Seattle, WA 98122-0195, USA
orders@anomalousrecords.com
www.anomalousrecords.com

Various Artists

Thinkbox Editions 01: Settings

CANADA THINKBOX THINK002CD CD (2003)

For an hour of pleasant solitude you could do worse than curl up with this low-key Canadian compilation for the evening. These 11 soft-core pieces are all vaguely nostalgic of feelings you can't quite pin down, and the eccentric construction methods used do somehow tend to parallel human thought systems. They achieve this through a kind of free-floating approach - loops, layers and pleasant semi-melodies within the electronic music, all interfacing nicely with the occasional documentary recordings that move in, circling carefully around the centre of activity. Voices, locations, interiors, all blending with the music and sound experiments to create a lulling, late-night feeling. Its warmth and mesmeric qualities will indeed send you into a pleasant half-sleep, or allow your brain to enter the 'Thinkbox'...a good box for thinking, where you can put up the Do Not Disturb sign. Featured artists (all solo turns) are Chris McNamara, Bill Van Loo, Mark Laliberte. Christopher Bissonnette, Steve Roy and Rob Theakston - nothing much is known about them, but they're probably very agreeable people with attractive furnishings in their homes.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 412, Station 'A', Windsor, Ontario N9A 6L7, Canada
www.thinkbox.ca

Xeno Volcano

To In Out and Open

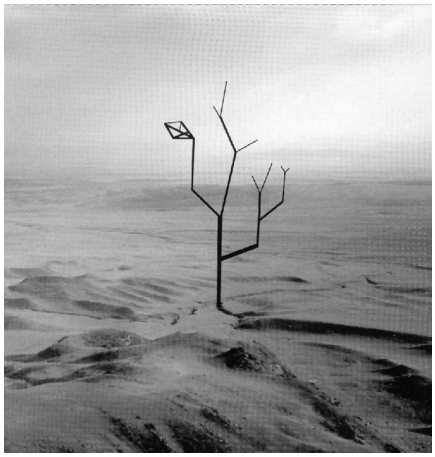
SWITZERLAND HARDPRESSE RECORDINGS CD (2002)

Xeno Volcano / Elektra Sturmschnell

Dir Organik

SWITZERLAND HARDPRESSE RECORDINGS HP 003 CD (2002)

Xeno Volcano

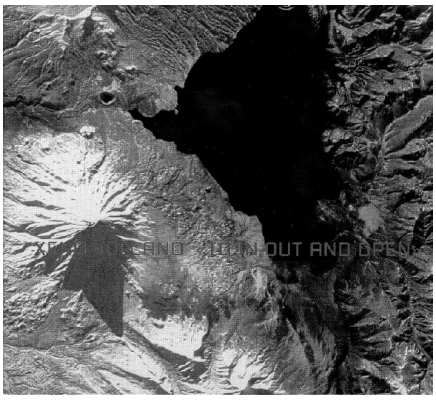


Black Book

UNPUBLISHED CD-R

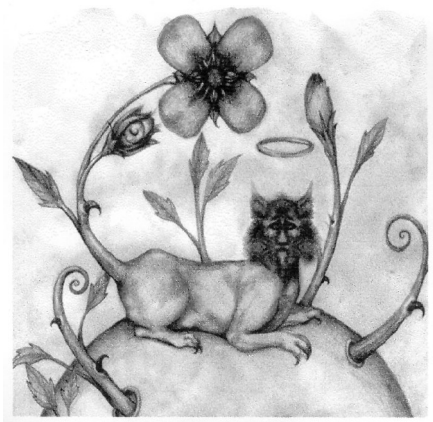
Three items sent to the TSP Box by Xeno Volcano, the alias of Dave Thayer, who is a California-born sound artist who's been based in Switzerland since 1999. He began making music when he was four years old, fascinated by the potential avenues for self-expression afforded by the modern tape recorder; maybe he made some good tapes back then. Myself, I think I'd rather hear his infantile juvenilia than the slick, over-processed gloop he's churning out in adult life. He's like what Heinz (57 Varieties) is to baby food. To In Out and Open seemed promising to these naive ears on first spin, but I wised up since - now comes over as bland and unadventurous, a meandering mood piece. Sheesh, can't musicians come up with something better than the aural equivalent of a bowl of goldfish for us to gawp at mindlessly? This CD draws on field recordings taken from Xeno's international travels, and sandwiches them together with dumb electric piano and synth tunes, propelled along at 12 mph by languid mechanical beats. Each cut soon becomes overlong and too tasteful for these ears, but - I guess - there ain't no denying the polish and finish of the work which betokens a commitment to quality product. There's a story-theme of sorts, structuring the long suite over three vague chapters, introduced by a breathy female vocal. The 'Love' chapter contains such encounters as 'Sex in the Bamboo Metropolis', while the 'Travel' episode introduces us to 'The Bilge Elvis' and a tour of the 'Whoopee Ball Traffic Mall.' Intriguing though these titles appear, the bizarre incongruous images are used merely as window-dressing to tart up the rather ordinary yawn-some music. Still, this CD is bound to have its uses - perhaps to be played on a long train journey when recovering from a hangover.

Die Organik is slightly more palatable. It arrives in a rather attractive monochrome package, including photo of a strange sculpture of a bare tree in a desert on back cover - all of which matches the sombre musical contents. 11 pieces of mood music - but a quite different mood to above, brothers - created by Xeno Volcano using lyrics by Elektra Sturmschnell. In fact these lyrics are more like - ahem - poetry, clearly well-constructed, and recited in a fairly toneless and world-weary voice by an unknown German speakstress, standing out with rather stark precision against the modest electronica backdrops of Xeno. Occasionally Xeno's music imitates distant rumbling thunder, or the wind;



on 'Elektra Desertqueen', it simply whimpers out a rather touching plaintive drone. As to content of words, my German isn't up to translation of themes, although 'Fiebertraum' means 'Fever Dream' - and the queasy twilight which bathes that particular track is entirely fitting for such a nightmare. Since female voice recites them, maybe we can read these 11 snapshots as static musical renderings of episodes in not-very-happy life of female protagonist; 'Lord Vulture' might hint that she's under threat from predatory husband, though she sounds oddly resigned to this fate when she addresses him, albeit sarcastically, as 'my lord, my vulture'. But then, I'm really just clutching at straws of meaning here. With the exception of 'Organik Spricht', which spoils the otherwise gentle mood by adding tedious beatbox rhythms, this hour long suite maintains a suitably bleak meditative atmosphere, and its theme is beefed up by Beckett-like contributions of wordsmith Sturmschnell.

Black Book is just a CD-R put into a tatty bag, but this is Thayer's way of assuring me that a proper release is imminent. Intriguingly, these pieces are based on dreams - dreams, which he wrote down in a black book, after waking up from them. Much like Jack Kerouac did in his sprawling tome Book Of Dreams, although those stories work slightly better if you know Kerouac's characters and stories well enough to realise that he is revealing their hidden psychological makeup through his subconscious nightly releases. In other words he even wrote about them in his sleep! Can Thayer live up to that sort of a promise? Not with these dreary musical utterances, he can't. His book of dreams has the pallid hue of ambiguity which one might expect as a last resort when attempting to delineate such nocturnal episodes, but it also



exhibits a crippling lack of focus; it winds up as dreary dark ambient music, not really very scary, not quite atmospheric enough, and generally very uncertain about where it's going. Pity the poor dupe who releases this slice of dull ineptitude!

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Xeno Volcano, Beckenhofstrasse 64, 8006 Zurich, Switzerland
info@hardpresse.com
www.hardpresse.com

The Gray Field Recordings

Sing 99 and 90

USA ETHEDRONE AC030 CD (2003)

Short, 30 minute CD of strange songs and alien noises from ever-so-slightly gothy combo based in America. This one had a strong opening track called 'Every Earthly Pendulum' with its ominous and threatening feedback mixed with dark drones, which appears to set nightmarish tone for what follows, but then turns out to be totally untypical of remainder. Following tracks are mostly the poetry of leader R Loftiss, recited (not sung) by same in her harsh and urgent whisper, against various fairly imaginative backings - or solutions that show a degree of ingenuity, at least. Most of these she concocts herself, using synth, flute, guitars, music box and a Nepali oboe. On 'Vls Od Q Cocasb', a small phantom choir backs her up; on 'Destroyed', she uses backwards tapes which summon up howling ghosts. Justin Jones and David Salim contribute some nice distressed violin and viola sounds on 'Inexhaustible Caricatures of Beauty' and 'Songs Unsung'. Loftiss's impressionistic words paint strange, static pictures, full of stark beauty like bare trees and ice, in this series of finely-crafted miniatures; but Jarboe isn't losing any sleep.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

915 W 16th, Stillwater, OK 74074, USA
grayfield@ethedrone.com
www.ethedrone.com/grayfieldrecordings

Javier Hernando

Hydro Parhelia

SPAIN GEOMETRIK GR-2110 CD (2002)

Return of this Barcelona-based solo turn who's becoming something of a TSP regular, but not (alas) a favourite; he always stops short of distinguishing himself, and this release is no exception. 7 tracks; a loose collection of small and intimate electronic and taped sounds, which start out promising yet invariably reveal themselves to be interminably boring. While listening, I feel like I'm trapped in an art-installation piece which is set in a lonely industrial landscape in the middle of nowhere, with an extremely limited view - so all I can do is watch the oil drums roll across the forecourt in the wind. Not as interesting as you might think. Hernando is capable of generating some half-decent sounds - some of which are almost moving and faintly nostalgic - yet he lacks any sense of purpose in their assembly or their usage.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

geom@geometrikrecords.com
www.geometrikrecords.com

Colin Andrew Sheffield

Spring (time) / The Bridge

USA ELEVATOR BATH EEAOA-04 7" VINYL SINGLE (1999)

Colin Andrew Sheffield / James Eck Rippie

Variations

USA ELEVATOR BATH EEAOA012 VINYL LP (2001)

Colin Andrew Sheffield

In Between

USA ELEVATOR BATH EEAOA08 MINI LP (2001)

Colin Andrew Sheffield

Side One / Side Two

USA ELEVATOR BATH EEAOA-01 7" VINYL SINGLE (1998)

Man, these records are dull! The solo records by Sheffield are about the most dreary kind of non-event electronica that keeps dogging my life so much, on a par with the completely hopeless Gareth Mitchell. The In Between 10-inch is a vaguely echoing clank affair, happening in an underground tunnel with soft earthy walls...a decent enough sound I suppose, but a totally centreless composition. You could try it at loud volume and see how far you get. This 'sampling minimalist' arranges for most of his records to be pressed in clear vinyl, presumably to express some idea about the 'transparency' of his technique or the 'simplicity' of his sounds, but all he conveys to me so far is the 'emptiness' of his head. The short 7-inch singles are so indiscreet, they're unnoticeable; a dreary feeling of vague dissatisfaction is your only reward for allowing these non-entities on your hi-fi. The collaboration with turntablist Rippie is, at least, endurable; a fairly palatable textured ambient swill, spread thinly over two short sides. They mean to mesmerise, with loops a-plenty guaranteed to lull you to sleep...the texturising mostly means lots of stuttering and interruptions to the flow, which become tedious. Everything is played in the same single key, as though they have Terry Riley or Steve Reich in mind. The B side is copied completely from the Brian Eno template, although slightly more severe than Eno would manage by himself - vague drifting atmospheres allow musical backdrops to shine forth from behind a cloud. Think of Oval on Mogadon or similar drug and you'd be getting warm; recorded in 2001, but sounds like something from the mid-1990s. Very dated.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 211501, Bedford, Texas 76095-8501, USA
eeaoa@elevatorbath.com
www.elevatorbath.com

BURNING EMPTINESS CORNER

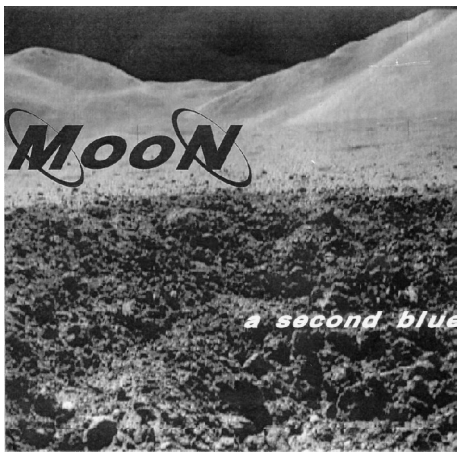
Tin.RP

abs.nce

FRANCE BURNING EMPTINESS INC BE_17 CD-R (ND)

A recent set of releases from these French underground electro-primitives B.L and DDN who first came our way with 2001's Hun_geR CD-R. With this and the two releases below, they can - at times - make most other electronic music look pretty fucking pathetic, and do so quite effortlessly. With their relentless stripped-down rhythms, monotonous bass riffs, and simple noise bursts randomly placed on top of everything, they redefine electronica as the sport of wild tigers and bloodthirsty crazymen, taking it away from the hands of pallid, bloodless computer-operators. There's a simplicity of methodology which conceals their ingenuity - or perhaps their brute stupidity. One might almost say they produce 'mesmerising' throbbing sounds, but really it's more like being hammered into submission by the mind-numbing idiocy of it, or flattened out by a massive dose of semi-legal drugs. Obstinate, determinedly dumb, and with a permanently grim aspect on their face at all times, this humourless duo grind out their brilliant narrowness with single-minded fervour of a Visigoth laying waste to a village. This release is austere, oppressive and poorly-recorded (although that does not deter from value of music) and you cannot fail to succumb to its steely charm - in the same way that you cannot fail to succumb to the poison bite of a viper. Recommended.

ED PINSENT 11-2003



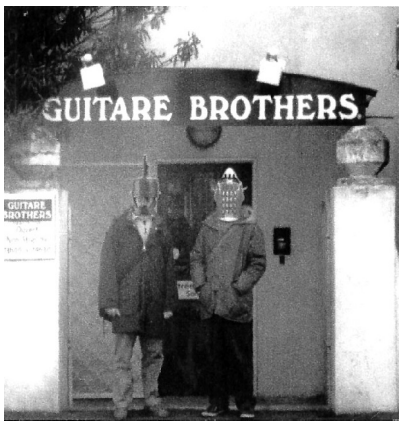
Moon

A Second Blue

FRANCE BURNING EMPTINESS INC BE#05 CD-R (2001)

A winning and entertaining slice of electronic-and-sample fun from Moon - second of three from the Burning Emptiness label this ish - and it's pretty much a 'themed' record of science fiction and outer space escapades, right down to moon landing cover art. Even the year it was recorded - 2001 - is probably in keeping with that! 'Initialize your system' is great power-punk-synth blast - distorted, loud, ear-bashing rhythms, but untypical of most of rest of record, which veers towards plainer instrumentalism. 'We Dream of Electronic Brains' makes heavy use of constant-repeated voice samples (and I'm enough of a trainspotter to 'get' two of them, plucked from Planet of the Apes and The Day the Earth Stood Still), sunk into a morass of simple looped melodies and pumping sequencers. 'Eagle One to Alpha' is built around a colossal chuntering bass riff, but if only it were better recorded (or this CD-R would play on my deck) then I might get full effect, which otherwise comes across a bit weedy. 'Klaatu Marada Niktu' plunders wholesale from the original Bernard Herrmann score, theremin and all. 'A Piano on Planet Mars' is a clever cut-up of simple electric-piano riffs and chords, interspersed with white noise bursts to create that illusion of a weak signal being beamed across outer space into a faulty receiver. Nice conceit. 'Zero Gravity' is the final cut and makes welcome return to the 'raw' electro-noise, with added beats and big 'steely' loop as grand as a deserted space station...with added guitar-like samples it all becomes fairly insane as it spins out of control. As an additional touch of nostalgia, DDN (who mastered this release) has included virtual run-out grooves at the end of each 'side' of this release, as his affectionate tribute to vinyl. OK, admittedly it's a bit on the 'cheesy' side with all these sci-fi refs and the old trick of repeated voice samples, but it's still great fun...brought many a smile to my jaded old visage.

ED PINSENT 10-2003



Guitare Brothers

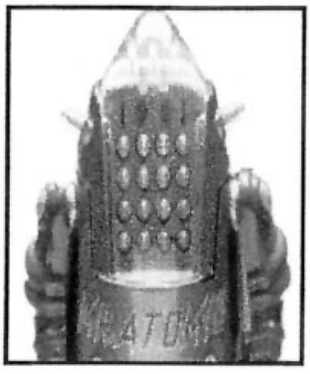
Guitare Brothers

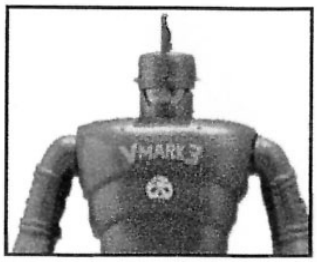
FRANCE BURNING EMPTINESS INC NO NUMBER CD-R (ND)

Irresistible!!...this is a coarse attempt at pop-art cut-up music, by 'Guyfire' and 'Jelly Baby' executed with many a brutaliste genius stroke, again with some involvement from B"L and DDN, and other compadres from their 'inner circle'. Produced from samples and cut-ups of second-hand French and English pop records, source materials chosen with skill and judgement by Donna and Jimmy and the Tin-RP guys, subsequently fed through the mincer of computer mixing (AudioMulch and ModPlug Tracker) with scant regard for good taste, coherence, or even good music-making. Results? Lovely!!!...rough, alive, dirty and coarse stinking pop-noise with brilliant beats and noises, these corpses from the past are re-animated until you can smell the stink of their sweat and feel the vibrations from their rotten tripes. There is nothing so dumb or obvious as a fucking 'breakbeat' or tape-loop going on here; au contraire, this is jigsaw-puzzle method by mad scientists, cutting things up and pasting bits together just to see what fits, much like the ghastly hybrids assembled by delinquent kid in Toy Story movie, only far worse. And much more imaginative than 90% of the formulaic garbage you hear in commercial hip-hop. Plus there's a playful Toy Robot theme to the sleeve art, and indeed the music sounds as though Japanese toy robots finally took over the world (or least the dance floor) and this is what resulted. With sarcastic 'Franglais' titles for each of the ten cuts, of which my favourite is 'Le Trifle Is Automatique' although musically the best one might be 'Astronaute, astronef, astronautique'. You NEED a copy of this, if you have ears and a sense of humour, and there are only 50 copies in the world so get your skates on!

ED PINSENT 11-2003

B+D Del Nista, Chemin de Saint Marc, 13130 Berre, France
bu-l@club-internet.fr
www.burningemptiness.fr.st





William Basinksi

This NYC composer gave us a short interview last ish and followed it up with a thoughtful present of many CDs to this magazine. I recommend an early investigation of this guy's work, mainly because it's so profoundly moving in mysterious ways, probing the areas of deep emotion that only certain music can reach. You may not need to own every single one of these - three are his own CD-R releases, although The River was released in Europe on Raster Noton and, for a time, was nominated 'Record of the month' or similar such accolade by the knowing staff at Rough Trade shop in Covent Garden, London. Although working with incredibly minimal means, and an inventive tape manipulator, Basinksi is neither an empty minimalist nor a vacuous process artist, being far too wrapped up with the content and subject matter at hand - and an incurable romantic to boot, one that makes even John Dowland look like an unsentimental iceberg. On the works below, Basinski works mostly I think with prepared tapes and to a lesser extent with very low-key electronics, although The River is derived from shortwave radio recordings. His tape method, particularly notable on Melancholia, is to use a few sources very sparingly but to maximum effect. He's probably not that far away from Brian Eno, whose Music For Airports remains a triumph of simplicity for this listener; he used only a few small segments of Robert Wyatt's piano, the voices of three German chanteuses, and set several tape loop actions running in pre-determined patterns, allowing for fascinating overlaps. In this way he generated the maximum possible output while expending the least possible energy, and made manifest his point about the wasteful inefficiency of most composed music. (It was ironic when a troupe of high-minded buffoons called the Bang on a Can All-Stars took the trouble to re-score Music For Airports for a small orchestra - thus translating its haiku-like simplicity back into overblown classical complexity - completely missing the point!) (EP)

William Basinski

The River

GERMANY RASTER-NOTON NO NUMBER 2 x CD (2002)

The River was composed in 1983 and is issued as a two-disc recording, each disc about LP length (circa 45-46 minutes apiece), and forms a single continuous work. It's kind of odd to find something so sumptuous and moving a recording on the Raster Noton label, which I normally associate with severe and dry abstract bleeps; The River submits to the identikit faceless packaging strategy of the series, plastic CD containers with no paper inserts and all the information (what little is given to us) printed on the disc; on the other hand, it arrives with a card slipcase printed with a minimal 'watery' wave design, which is very attractive. The simplicity of The River is impressive; it balances two basic elements, a gentle white noise and burring (static from the shortwave radio) with short loops of orchestral music, horns or strings. Modest in scale, yet mighty in reach. Melancholic and lost spring to mind as descriptive terms, but words aren't adequate to nail down the honesty of this slow and statuesque music. It's a fitting soundtrack as the aftermath to a disaster, either global, local or personal; there are the ashes of a great conflagration, the remains of a washed-out landscape. All is dead.

Basinski had this to say about The River (see interview last ish): 'The River is a 90 minute meditation I recorded in 1983 which was the culmination of my shortwave music experiments. Originally recorded in real time on a 90 minute cassette, it was my attempt to portray the 'music of the spheres'. All of the sounds came from the airwaves. The loops contained one or two bars recorded randomly from muzak radio then slowed down a couple of speeds. These were then woven together live with a background of shortwave radio static, which would sometimes shift and bring in another bit of disconnected melody like a wisp of cigarette smoke floating across a room.'

William Basinski

The Disintegration Loops II

USA MUSEX INTERNATIONAL NO NUMBER CD-R (2003)

Basinki's Disintegration Loops II is part two of a four CD set, continuing his 'success story' from last year, with two further experiments generated using the same process as the first piece which he made into his personal soundtrack of doom for the Twin Towers disaster of 2001. Old tape recordings of his early orchestral pieces were falling apart as he tried to rescue them through remastering, until he became seduced by the sounds they made as they disintegrated. Attenuated horns and muffled percussion struggle through layers of oxide, and ingeniously patterned looped phrases (never quite the same twice, due to tape making erratic contact with machine head) describe an apocalyptic arc into the pit of destruction in glorious slow motion. At length the stuttering and perching sounds start to resemble the dying embers of a raging inferno, and the listener watches these with the same hopeless fascination one watches a fire slowly dying out. Of the music on offer here, this has the most sense of a dramatic event to it, and though laced with painful emotions, it also bears the sorrow with a dignity that it passes on to the listener.

William Basinski

Melancholia

USA MUSEX INTERNATIONAL NO NUMBER CD-R (2003)

Melancholia withdraws the mind to a private place filled with an unutterable sadness. Across 14 tracks, small guitar and piano loops pick out simple skeletal melodies; in between, formless electronic washes give voice to further difficult emotions. The sad melodies are reprised to make this a kind of pocket symphony of composed sounds, while all the sounds on offer are so small and attenuated that you feel they're about to wither away any second; open the window and the entire cobweb composition will blow out of the window. Although 'real' instruments are recognisable, this is entirely a studio work and would be virtually impossible to reproduce on a stage with classical musicians - so let's give Bang on a Can the afternoon off. Basinski reminds me of Joseph Cornell, the American artist whose wonderful films I saw recently. He never shot a single frame of footage himself for these, but worked entirely with found movies, splicing together educational and nature films with other found movies to create his own highly idiosyncratic vision.

William Basinski

Watermusic II

USA MUSEX INTERNATIONAL NO NUMBER CD-R (2003)

Watermusic II is even more attenuated than the two above, an hour-long single track of very simple near-ambientness with its layers of tape loops resembling a cross between a quiet church organ and a Victorian music box. An achingly beautiful chord simply spinning round in a pretty kaleidoscopic pattern - no real meaning to it, but simply gorgeous to listen to. Again, as with the Cornell movies, you get this feeling of suspension - that the music never advances anywhere at all, but simply allows a beautiful mood to sustain itself for a very long time. What could be wrong with that?

ED PINSENT 10-2003

William Basinski:
118 North 11th Street, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn,
New York 11211, NY, USA
billy2062@yahoo.com

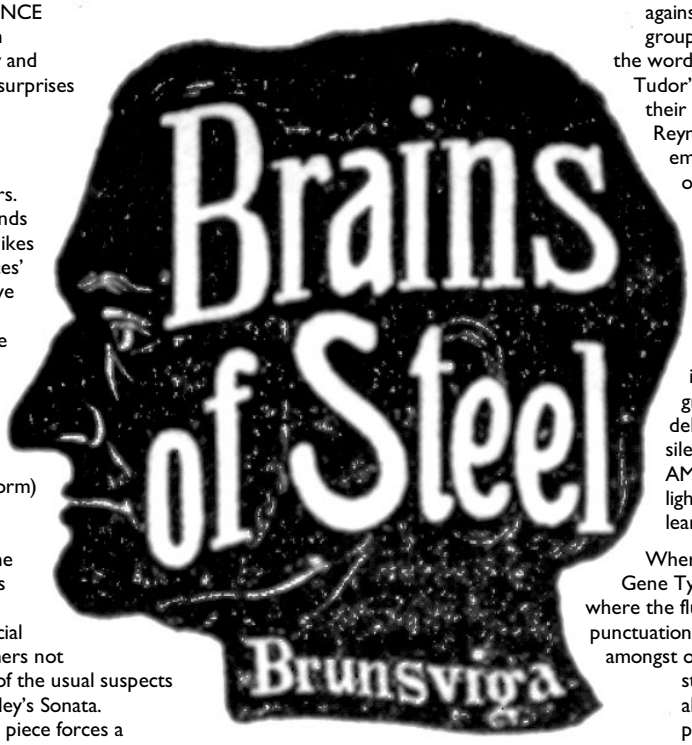
ONCE Festival

Various Artists

Music from the ONCE Festival 1961-1966

USA NEW WORLD RECORDS 80567-2 5 x CD BOXED SET (2003)

There are documents and there are documents. This release is less a document than a revelation. It reveals nothing less than the history of an important slice of the American experimental music tradition. And it comes as a surprise for, whilst labels such as Lovely Music and Alga Marghen have for some time been reissuing or making available for the first time recordings by what we may consider the key ONCE Festival composers - Robert Ashley, David Behrman, Alvin Lucier and Gordon Mumma (who made up the Sonic Arts Union) - little or no attention has been paid to their lesser-known contemporaries. Nor indeed to the early works of the Sonic Arts Union composers. Hitherto it has been as if we know Ashley et al's work as always-already conceived, shorn of its history and context. This important document, taken from six years of performances in and around the ONCE Festival series of concerts held in Ann Arbor, Michigan presents that history and context for the first time. And what surprises it contains across its five CDs.



There are reviews and reviews. This release has already been summarily dealt with in some quarters. Writing in The Wire, Brian Morton finds in it little evidence of what made the likes of Ashley and Mumma 'major presences' For me this misses the point; whilst we might consider some of its parts as foreshadowing their mature work, the compositions and the performers collected here document a tradition (if that is the right word) in gestation, moreover one which demonstrates a radical fracturing of existing traditions (serialism, sonata form) and a developing commitment to risk, experimentation and indeterminacy. There is not the space here to give the detailed critique that a project such as this deserves. Some highlights then, which are not intended to be prejudicial against those composers and performers not mentioned here. To begin with one of the usual suspects and the opening piece of the set, Ashley's Sonata. Performed here by the composer the piece forces a reassessment of Ashley's own beginnings. A florid display of dynamic and timbral complexity, Ashley here seems to be straining at the atonal and serialist legacies of the European tradition. For those who know him for his spoken voice alone, to hear him as piano virtuoso is, curiously, to hear his later 'simpler' pieces as similarly virtuosic. That is, virtuosity understood in the approach and organization of material, not in empty displays of technique. For those seeking predictive elements of Ashley's later electronic work there is his large-scale Fourth of July, a tape collage of a backyard party (in allusion at least foreshadowing the 'Backyard' movement of his opera Perfect Lives?) and tape-looped sine tones. A further experiment in scale comes in his In Memoriam... series, here represented by In Memoriam... Crazy Horse for symphony orchestra. This piece finds Ashley experimenting with indeterminacy through a circular score that privileges social responsibility between performers, each of whom, working in quartets, finds themselves obliged to distinguish their playing from one another or, at times, seek to make themselves indistinguishable. The result is fifteen minutes of wheeling, rough-hewn homogeneity from which remarkable 'group solos' emerge - an object lesson in how improvising jazz orchestras could work.

Enough of Ashley (though there is more). Let us turn to some less well-known ONCE participants. Donald Scavarda deserves wider recognition for much of his work, not least for his Matrix for Clarinet, published in 1962 and the first score to deploy multiphonics. This solo piece can now be heard as a classic of what has now become a genre within both composed and improvised practices, and stands up well as a precursor (the template, even?) for such fine modern players as John Butcher. Roger Reynolds's Mosaic for piano and flute (doubling piccolo) features our old friend Bob James, he of the 'Taxi' theme and countless records of supper jazz. Best known in these circles, though, for his Explosions release on ESP (which also features the electronics of Ashley and Mumma), Mosaic finds him in 1962 exploring both the inner reaches and the percussive surfaces of his piano in a fragile net of a piece held together by occasional knots of near-unison playing. By contrast, Reynolds's Wedge, scored for chamber group, presents a tumult of exhilarating atonal cacophony. Reynolds is one of the many revelations in this set, displaying -as do all of the composers presented here - an unwillingness to settle on any particular form or setting. Many of the composers here are composers in action - testing out new ideas from year to year, discarding some, revisiting others. A particular strength of the chronological arrangement of this set is that it encourages to follow a composer through many years of exploration. Reynolds's A Portrait of Vanzelli finds the anarchist's words declaimed against intermittent outbursts of chamber group and electronics, at times obliterating the words in a fashion not dissimilar from David Tudor's masking of Cage's story-telling on their recording of Indeterminacy. In Reynolds's piece, though, the determined emotionality of the narrator's voice is offset by unsettled and equally determined, non-programmatic sonorities. Tudor himself appears at ONCE too, in a 1966 duo with Pauline Oliveros, performing her Applebox Double, an improvisation with live electronics whose score is the material itself - various sound-producing devices installed in wooden apple boxes: all groans, roars and stifled cries. The delicacy and control here - often falling to silence, resemble nothing less than an AMM performance; some of the lesser lights of the 'reductionist' school could learn much here.

Where to stop? What about Robert ('Blue' Gene Tyranny) Sheff's Diotima for flute and tape where the flute appears to function more as punctuation to a multi-movement tape piece of, amongst other sounds, plucked and bowed piano strings? The flautist (Anne Aitchison) is also called upon to drop pennies into a piggy bank and to play her instrument wi thout (or so it sounds) the mouthpiece. Such theatricality cries out for a DVD of such performances (little chance, I should think) - the ONCE festival was as much about theatre as about sound alone. Or shall we end with Gordon Mumma's brief tape composition, Greys, a stereo realisation that glimmers, spirals and susurrates in the space of three short minutes? There is so much here to hear and, moreover, this is no mere history lesson. Much presented here still sounds urgent. It is the sound of composers and performers at

work, dismantling the boundaries between serialism and indeterminacy, between music and theatre, between seriousness and comedy. If you want to hear one version of where postmodern creative practices come from, this is it. And, for me at least, I am left wanting to hear what these composers and players are doing today. We know about some, of course, but this fine set leaves me not simply with history, but with a future. And, unlike Brian Morton, I shall certainly be listening to this set more than ONCE: indeed, I have already done so. Many times.

CHRIS ATTON

www.newworldrecords.org

Philip Brophy

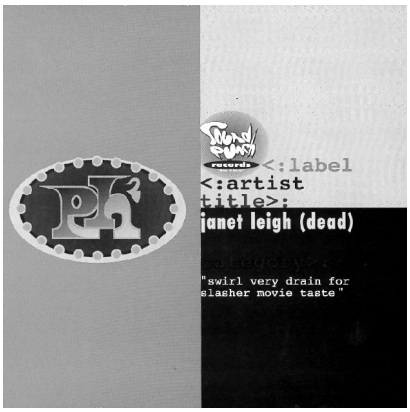
Brophy - Australian composer and film director, deeply knowledgeable about film soundtrack recordings, and besides contributing his Cinesonics column to journal Real Time in Sydney, has written series of pieces 'The Secret Life of Film Music' to The Wire magazine that have made far-flung connections between unrelated subjects. Just the kind of writing I like, in fact. His Sound Punch label is intended to release backlog of his soundtrack recordings and related projects. A small dilemma faces anyone interested in soundtrack music. Does one collect / listen to soundtrack for own sake - ie enjoy it as a piece of music, without even seeing the movie. Or does one need to appreciate how great composed soundtracks, eg Herrmann's Vertigo, enhance the storyline in effective and subtle ways. To appreciate latter may need to watch movie on DVD, then repeat key scenes to see what composer is doing. This interrupts flow of story, though. Former collecting approach is easier in many ways, especially when (as is often the case) the movie isn't terribly good to begin with, but boasts great incidental music, links, themes, or in some cases one of two good songs.

Brophy understands the Vertigo thing only too well. Note his witty titles attached to these CDs, which refer directly to Hitchcock and obliquely to Blade Runner. Richness of knowledge surely there in brain of Brophy. His music brilliantly crafted, and not as ironic or kitschy as the humourous packaging leads you to expect. Virtually no 'narrative' content, certainly never anything so obvious as voice samples from soundtracks. Don Letts did this for Big Audio Dynamite and results were frankly crass. Narrative elements in his music something which Brophy may have effaced deliberately, in trying to second-guess and trip up anything the listener filled with preconceptions may expect. But these CDs still lush and 'cinematic', as the best sumptuous scores are, filled with layers of musical richness and activity. (EP)

Ph2

Janet Leigh (dead)

AUSTRALIA SOUND PUNCH RECORDS
HURT-06 CD (2001)



Janet Leigh (dead) is credited to Ph2 and is the best one of these three for my money, delivering powerful and subtly disturbing electronic music, built mostly out of samples of voices and water recordings. It's supported with a clever set of subtexts referring obliquely to Hitchcock's Psycho, starting with its scrambled subtitle 'swirl very drain for slasher movie taste' which sums up the most obvious aspects of the film, and six track titles derived from all the numbers Brophy could find from obsessively watching every frame of the movie - the time at start of film, the amount of money stolen by Marion Crane, the amount of money she got when trading cars, the license plates for both her cars, number of the cabin she stays in at Bates Motel. Well, I'm even more obsessive - and checked these factoids out in my Richard J Anobile Psycho Picador paperback from 1974, only to find that Brophy has got second number plate wrong by one letter! No matter. This is excellent electronic music performed entirely on the sampler by Brophy, with help from Philip Samartzis with CDs and mixing desk - and was originally conceived for an underground public sound site in Copenhagen. It has the darkness and atmospheric touches that might make it a credible 'alternative' soundtrack to Psycho, but Brophy is not aiming for anything so obvious. He does not attempt a shower scene soundtrack, nor anything exciting or alarming for other murder scenes; in fact it might be (taking clues from titles) that he is scoring those parts of the movie that originally had no music at all, where Hitchcock let the very grimness of the subject matter, the lighting, the photography, and the intensive performance of Anthony Perkins do all the work for him. It might be more profitable to read Janet Leigh (dead) as a musical commentary on the movie, a deconstruction of sorts, trawling the black-and-white images for a strange psychic energy to be rechannelled as this strange sampler music. I'm sure Brophy has tapped into something entirely true to the spirit of the film.

Philip Brophy

Filmmusic Vol 1

AUSTRALIA SOUND PUNCH RECORDS HURT-05 CD (2002)

Filmmusic Vol 1 is subtitled 'collection for very pieces out my cinema'. Here are two genuine film soundtracks - one of them unused. With Headless, the story goes that Brophy, having already worked with film-maker Ana Kokkinos on Only The Brave in 1994, assumed that he would win the commission for her next film Head On in 2000. Alas, his completed work was rejected, so here it be on CD instead. The story sounds completely ghastly, a tedious tale of drugs and gay nightlife with an ethnic (Greek) twist, something along the lines of Hanif Kureishi's abominable screenplays. To express sympathy with the embattled main character, a young Greek kid striving to reject the conformity of his parents, Brophy scored music using some 'reconstructed fragments' of live music by some Greek musicians. For the other half of the CD, we hear Paradise - soundtrack to a short film of the same name that was actually released, directed by Ilana Schulman in 1998. Here Brophy attempts to 'evoke cinematic conventions of the sea', as the story is a kind of allegorical tale about a mermaid who resolves to live on dry land with a domestic family. He does it with many short tracks, all pop song length, with ingenious and very subtle use of old records - congas and organs, probably snatched from rare 1950s LPs with garish album covers, are seamlessly inserted into original compositions. Personally I would prefer fewer drum machines on these recordings, but perhaps he has an audience at sophisticated clubs in Australia who like to listen to film music and like to dance as well. Enjoyable CD, but I'm slightly taken aback to hear how 'up' it all sounds when the original films (which I'm unlikely ever to see) seem to call for something a little more subdued.

Philip Brophy, Francois Tetaz and Darrin Verhagen

Beautiful Cyborg

AUSTRALIA SOUND PUNCH RECORDS HURT-04 CD (2002)

On Beautiful Cyborg, Brophy is joined by fellow soundtrack composers Francois Tetaz and Darrin Verhagen for six substantial tracks plus an intro, all dedicated to the names of lovely female robots taken from Japanese science-fiction animation movies. Beautiful Cyborg was originally a live surround-sound event, electronic music and sound effects combined live on stage to accompany projected Anime movies. This is another set of virtual music, all done with keyboards, samplers, CD playbacks, drum machines and studio processing; much more uptempo than the CD above, and its jolly tunes are bound to liven up anyone's cocktail party. The inspiration for the music however seems to have been completely visual - a celebration of the visual details of these anime movies, such things as 'sensuous metals, delicate super-conductors, contemplative gears, penile foreheads, delicious motor mechanics, dimensional speed, transfigured space and sculptured visages'. This is one approach to cinema-appreciation I hadn't quite reckoned with, one that dispenses with such tedious conventional elements as narrative, character and photography, and instead sees the screen as a potential plate-load of pure sensual gratification, cocaine for the eyes. The music, in this context, seems to make more sense; shorn of any linear story-telling concerns, it simply spins on from one shiny moment to the next. The original playback in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound must have been something to behold.

ED PINSENT 10-2003

Rubber Records, 441 Spencer St, West Melbourne, VC 3000, Australia
www.rubberrecords.com.au/soundpunch
www.philipbrophy.com

ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC

MAGICA CHARMS, MAGNETIC SPELLS AND AUTOMOBILIA HALF-FACED OPTIONS

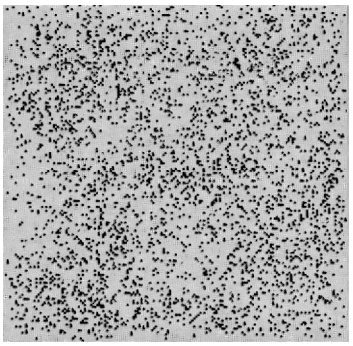
John Wall

hylic

UNITED KINGDOM UTTERPSALM CD6 CD (2002)

Persistent readers will know how this magazine has followed and supported John Wall's progress ever since his earliest major release, 1995's Alterstill (the very first one, 1993's Fear Of Gravity slipped us by at the time although has been purchased since, but even Wall himself wishes to disown that one), and been constantly impressed at the effectiveness of his rigorous cut-up methods. A tough-minded self-critic of his own work, he throws away far more than he releases; now, more parsimonious than before, his latest release lasts but 20 minutes, yet it's a thoroughly intense miniature and packed with more ideas than a lot of recent releases three times its length. He used to revel in sampling music sumptuously and creating unexpected juxtapositions and exciting combinations from disparate recorded sources, while mindful of the ethical dilemmas he was posing for himself. Now he limits himself, Puritan-like, to the most abstract, attenuated and compressed sounds he can manage. The more his work decreases in scope, volume and content, the more the sheer directed power of it grows, exponentially. Three short tracks composed between 2001 and 2002 are all he has to offer to the world this year, taking samples from recordings or performances by real-life improvising musicians Matt Davis, Knut Aufermann, Mark Sanders and John Edwards, and

processing them through digital technology so comprehensively that absolutely nothing recognisable remains, not a single trace of the original acoustic bass, drums or trumpet. The resulting timbral splinters are edited together, mosaic style, to produce this white-hot barrage of tiny microscopic needles, bullets, shrapnel and miniaturised explosives. This CD is more devastating than a Claymore mine. Without doubt this aggressive time-bomb is hurled by John Wall into the face of the kind of wearisome banality, indifference and smarmy glibness that one finds in all aspects of modern life in the UK (and not just in the music industry or media worlds, although those would make suitable targets too). There's anger in these sonic barbs. Clicks and cuts, realised with deadly sharp precision, are rendered and published with extremely high volume and clarity, suspended within the vapour of a ghostly shimmering drone. The solid fragments of sound whizz past your head like hyper-fast chunks of ice in deep space, lacerating your space suit and denting your helmet. A hard and merciless statement of electro-severity.



ED PINSENT 11-2003

PO Box 14056, London N5 2WG
utterpsalm@1way.co.uk
www.utterpsalm.com

Erikm and Jérôme Noetinger

What a Wonderful World

USA ERSTWHILE RECORDS 030 CD (2003)

Topnotch live electronics from these French maestros - a delirious experimental noise which lends new vigour to electro-acoustic modes. Erikm has his turntables, a mixing desk (one of the main instruments) and a keypad computer system, while Noetinger has his usual electro-acoustic and electronic devices too numerous to list. What strikes you first of all is the unique character of their playing - they are not afraid to exhibit strong personality, no matter how eccentric it may appear, indeed they relish the opportunity to exhibit all facets of their weird personas. Then there's the sheer volume and indeed quantity of what they do; with unabashed Gallic taste for excess, they spoon it on like so much whipped cream in a juicy French pastry, with thick throbbing noises, insane whoops of delight, buzzes blurts and blasts, sounding noisier than a combo three times their size. Nothing succeeds like excess.

The titles for these nine cuts are structured around the lyrics to that unbearably corny (but internationally successful) hit song by Louis Armstrong. Other than this there is thankfully no real resemblance to music as we understand it. First cut features lots of radio static, loops and harsh noises, as we tune our personal receivers to their transmitter and pick up signals from a new world. Second track surrounds us with alien bird calls, insane chattering and wild squeals - inside a menagerie, where the atmosphere is charged and electric. Incredible textures and contrasts, some of which explode on the tongue like miniature fizz-bombs (sherbert or cardamoms). Third cut starts with intense fields of static attacks, a cloud of iron filings; then quieter more mysterious sounds as of doors opening and echoing as we enter further into this new world. Ugly twisted bruits are placed directly alongside beautiful electro-hum drones; the landscape changes every second, mutating into something new; controlled depth-charge explosions are detonated. A joyous madness guides the every move of this excitable pair; how often do you hear such delighted explorations of sound, just for the sheer fun of it? This track, called 'Bloom for Revox chili peppers', would be the first one I would play to convince the doubters of the value of this music, an exceptionally good chopped-up semi-narrative affair that even lives up to the promise of its title.

An ear-shattering yell starts off the next cut, followed by a recording of unruly rebellious children squealing; this fragment of a domestic episode is revisited on track 8, but here the yelling is immediately subsumed in a submarine of squeaking electronics and strange peeping sounds. In the midst of this mangled electronic stew, the human yelling voice keeps resurfacing. A real puzzler, combined with additional outdoor field recordings for added textural pleasure. Fifth cut takes handfuls of tiny slivers of real music sampled from records, feeds them through the shredder and mixes them with microbe-sized crumbs of electronic metal, with very impolite (downright rude) harsh noise interrupting. An illogical composition that makes perfect sense. Eventually the CD calms down from its continual shock-tactic strategy and, on 'Dark Sacred night' at least, almost lulls you to sleep with its soothing, quieter effects - only to wake you up again on track 8, where the unruly children come crashing in again like a nightmare. Now they're busy with a mad piano lesson, which they hate with a vengeance (one critic thinks their abominable playing is the cause of the yelling on track four). The episode is overlaid with abrasive crackling and noise treatments; hilarious and exhilarating stuff.

All the stops are pulled out for 'Pretty in the sky', which commences with a wild maelstrom of incredible sonic barrages - everything appears to be flying around the room, much like the possessed domestic objects in the movie Poltergeist. But then the duo, exhibiting their usual control, suddenly generate a pulsing calming environment, a chamber of peace and solitude with a still centre where the listener can re-orient themselves. This CD is one of the most sympatico collaborations you could hope for, a tasty combination of nice and nasty noises, with plenty evidence of quick-thinking on part of both players, and deft use of mechanical devices which are subverted and changed, until they become organic limbs, extensions of the hands of these talented players. Recorded in 2001 and 2002 in Marseille, then reorganised and mixed by the pair of 'em...comes in a dazzling sleeve made of micro digital artwork that could be sub-atomic particles of a psychedelic molecule. In the words of Captain Beefheart...lick a stamp, see a movie.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

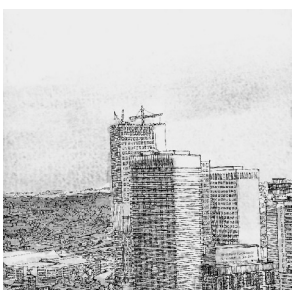
www.erstwhilerecords.com

Mommur Chasma

Parelspanner

THE NETHERLANDS BOTSBAD 01 CD (2003)

Quite nice, engaging and idiosyncratic electro-acoustic work from this Dutch duo who have their roots in an earlier group called Indra Karmuka. They're nature-pictorialists - and the first two cuts set the scene for their intended approach nicely. There's 'Bird Valley' with its weird, low soaring drones and added birdsong sound effects and assorted wobbly mis-shapes thrown on top; followed immediately by 'Phantom Ship', which is mostly dominated by the motor sound of this strange aerial craft as it flies overhead, flashing occasional warning lights and with blips sounding on the radar. These two basic approaches proceed to more or less repeat themselves with variations over the remaining 9 cuts. With titles like 'Creaking Wood in Moonlight' and 'Capricorn Beetle', there's virtually no need for me to describe anything that's going on - these artists, Floris Sirag and Peter Veenstra, have a very strong pictorial-narrative intent, and it's backed up completely by the photo-collages on the covers - full moons, planet Earth, flying moth-beetle hybrids, dried Autumn leaves - and the short poetic texts (not recited) printed here to unpack further meaning from the mood-pieces. While these pseudo-fairyland-soundscapes have tremendous charm, they can also be a bit inconsequential - they drift in and out again and don't leave much impression afterwards. But while you're there, it's an enjoyable sojourn in a country filled with odd machinery that doesn't quite work, populated by singing insects that behave in unpredictable fashion, and menageries of wild animals purring as they lick their strange-coloured fur. It's agreeable to hear a gentle, non-aggressive and co-operative approach to making this sort of music - clearly they don't feel the need to resort to 'nasty' sounds, loud volume or full-on playing to get our attention - and there's not an ambient cliché in sight.



ED PINSENT 11-2003

mommurchasma@botsbad.nl
www.botsbad.nl/mommurchasma

Benjamin Renard et Fabrice Eglin

Benjamin Renard et Fabrice Eglin
FRANCE VERT PITUITE LA BELLE VP0201 CD (2001)

A fine beefy slab of French abstract noise from these two rugged lumberjack-styled art-manglers. Eglin produces great wodges of feedback or shrill screaming tones from his solid body guitar and rhomboid-shaped amplifier, while Renard is credited with assorted electro-acoustic devices which he collectively calls 'Shmurtz'. There's a good invented word for you, and one which adequately sums up the noises on offer here. These two unkempt ragamuffins explore ruined worlds of hum, clatter, echo and scrape and for the most part create quite compelling noise-continuum expositions that fascinate, interest and surprise, and are alway gorgeous to listen to. The seven tracks are all given vaguely eerie or airy titles - 'Witches', or 'Vapeurs', alluding to spirits of the air, or 'Radioshmurtz' which describes the sort of richly-composted static murk they capture from the ether. Actually 'Radioshmurtz' and its answer piece 'Radioshmurtz (2h34mn)' are in a way the least adventurous works, since they're mostly rather ordinary shortwave radio and feedback experiments, but what do we care when we have the first three cuts, all of which are real killers. '24 Août Faux Départ' kicks in with a wild, high-volume harsh grating assault that most guitarists would give their left leg for, even if its aggressiveness does dissipate into gentler feedback and amplifier hum. 'Witches Part 1' and its sister work 'Witches Part 2' are the best cuts for this listener, each one a complex symphony of unidentifiable electro-acoustic noises smeared together into fascinating, mutant, semi-structured episodes. The sinister ringing and chiming drones of the final cut, which end this fine CD, will plague you for many days and nights.

Renard and Eglin have worked with Noetinger, The Bole Duo and Dust Breeders - all names of star quality in France where they're based, and the Vert Pituite label is also at the centre of a local scene for events, gigs, and CD releases of this nature. They put out a periodical called Phrênésie and organise collaborations between artists and collectives. The fine Régis Bunel CD (see improv section) also emanates from this Parisian zone. By all means do investigate.

ED PINSENT 12-2003

11 Place Gambetta, 75020 Paris, France
vertpituite@multimania.com
www.vertpituite.multimania.com

Paul H Locasta

Heaven On Earth
USA TEMPO KANNAN BAIL 0001CD (1995)

A colourful release from this lesser-spotted Texan sound artist. Heaven on Earth is from 1995 - totally instrumental electronics, it's mostly a lively mixture of approaches, ranging from pure electro-acoustic treatments, to heavily disguised field recordings, to low-key playing of ordinary instruments - such as on the 'Not Whistling Dixie' suite, which features repetitions of sampled bass guitar strums, fed through a very tasteful effects pedal, which are overlaid with a type of roaring noise, full of bluster but ultimately ineffectual, which I can only describe as 'Merzbow-lite'. Locasta's music is like an emotional, constantly changing and slightly unstable fellow - he veers from smiling in vaguely pleasant way, to suddenly growing quite agitated for no reason, but for the latter aspect the accompanying music never gets quite whole-heartedly rowdy enough for me - not even on the decently edgy and antsy track, 'Comfort'. Best I can say is that it develops, in places, into a compellingly chaotic sonic sprawl. Arrives in a sleeve decorated with architect's sketches of a modern high-rise development - in other words an example of chaotic urban sprawl. Is this Heaven on Earth or is it only a banker's nightmare of 21st century Singapore?

ED PINSENT 10-2003

2135 Lexington, Houston, TX 77098, USA

Various Artists

In Memoriam Tarkovsky
RUSSIA IVB RECORDS IVBCD08 CD (2002)

Four electro-acoustic artists - including at least two personal favourites of your writer - join together on this comp to pay tribute to the famed visionary film-maker. According to press release, the 'tracks are inspired somehow by movies like Stalker, Ivan's Childhood and many others... or interpret ideas, atmospheres found in his works.' However, after many playings, the point of this CD continues to elude me. If this had been just another weird noise comp, you probably wouldn't have gone anywhere near it, and with pretty good reason - as it's rather indifferent music for the most part.

Michael Prime contributes 'Across The River', far and away the most successful cut; its ring-modulated voices, weaving in and out of an uncertain electronic landscape, are genuinely troubling and gradually build up a tenuous narrative of their own; all is not well in the garden, whatever is going on. Christian Renou plays a tape of the great man speaking, puts a slight echo on it, and plays a non-descript Ambient plod behind it. Tedious. Stanislav Kreitch attempts, in about the most banal fashion of the four here, to tell a story in sound - with meandering synth passages, water sound effects and clanking metal pieces, highly reminiscent of Stalker. But it's as though he's trying to describe the film back to you very badly, only vaguely remembering the details without any comprehension of why the characters were in The Zone in the first place. Still, I should show more respect to this veteran Russian synth artist (see below). Finally, comes the estimable Roger Doyle, whose 'Mr Foley's Final Moments', is not without interest, although not a patch on what we know this great Irish composer to be capable of (Babel, for example). That said, it creates a fine tension as it describes strange exteriors and then strange interiors, with a strong eye for details, and cleverly eliding the differences between the two in a way that perhaps Tarkovsky would indeed be proud of. I refer you to the final scene of Solaris, for example.

There is also a connection here with the music - or at least the machinery - of Edward Artemeyev, the Russian composer who did most of the original soundtrack music for Tarkovsky's work. Dennis of IVB records told me this by e-mail: 'Kreitchi, well known Moscow composer, has been working with electronic sound research since 1960s, now making music for experimental ballet and theatre. Besides all [that], he took part in inventing and assembling infamous unique ANS synthesizer. The same device used by Edward Artemyev for several soundtracks for Tarkovski's movies (Mirror, Stalker, Solaris). Now Stanislav Kreitchi is a keeper of this big and strange instrument, the only one existing in the world. Not a surprise, he used ANS in his piece 'Water, water, water everywhere' (recorded last summer, few weeks BEFORE Europe was flooded..) for this compilation.' By way of reply, I told him exactly what I thought about the recent Hollywood version of Solaris. He takes a kinder view of it: 'The new version of Solaris evokes so bad reaction? Hm.. yes, it's kind of.. easier movie. With not so many deep psychological symbols, if I may dare to say. But I can't say Sodeberg's interpretation is explicit profanation. I don't like Sex, lies and videotape but his Solaris isn't cheap speculation. I don't think I would like to see it again, as Tarkovsky's Solaris. I wasn't disappointed.'

Good words there. But overall you won't learn much from this CD about the work, life, art of Tarkovsky, or gain much insight into the meaning of his films; well, how could any CD release possibly live up to that? Also, for a release that's supposed to be a tribute to a film-maker, the visuals are pretty hopeless. The front cover features a diamond-cut shape which unfolds to reveal a poorly-printed murkiness in grey - looks like the close-up of a fence or something. Above this sits a dismal portrait of Andrei Tarkovsky looking into a camera eyepiece. The inlay card is marginally better, with an image that's recognisably a still from one of his films, but contains none of the original's hypnotic power.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

Pavla Andreeva, 285.282, Moscow, 115162, Russia

Quintet Avant

Floppy Nails
AUSTRIA MEGO 059 VINYL LP (2002)

A great and raucous avant flab-fest from five French gonks, featuring stars Marchetti and Noetinger, plus Jean Pallandre, all playing Revox magnetic tape recorders; joined by Marc Pichelin on the analogue synth, and Laurent Sassi who recorded the whole meshugana mess and did the live mix. A deliciously unrefined record, its raw noises, impolite yawps and ferocious screeches will guarantee years of messy, splurgey listening pleasure for you, and nothing but intense annoyance for those tidy-minded non-entities who live in your vicinity. Everything on side one - a 14 minute mish-mash called 'Les Doux Moux' - makes for a meaty electronic stew, fit for loading into a mortar and firing behind enemy lines before the evening is out.

Follow it up with 20 suet dumplings and victory will be ours. The second side - a longer, more expansive rigmarole called 'Les Bleus Mots' - is slightly less noisy at first, but no less 'out' or adventurous as far as making an electric banana-peel goes. A continual stream of loopy, inventive ideas pour out from the tape-wielding section of the act - orchestras, echoing, thumping, stretched rubber bands, backwards tapes and heaven knows what; and you can really tell it's done by magnetic tape rather than by sampling, because you get none of that awful harsh cut-off effect which belongs to the digital realm. Here, the tangible sounds fold in and fold out like so much plasticine - the musicians are virtually moulding it in their hands. This cut really lets rip for the final segment, piling everything into a high-volume, discordant racket filled with event and moment - distorted radio and speaking voices creating a babel of gibberish, mighty explosions, roars of metallic tigers, bulldozers moving piles of green chicken flesh, that sort of thing...the sped-up tapes and groaning rhythms create a semi-controlled chaos, making this lovely record a fine baffler for unwary minds. The only thing I'm puzzled by is why this record's electrifying content is concealed by such a bland, jokey cover (courtesy of Tina Frank, the in-house Mego designer) which communicates precisely nothing about the music within. The front cover has a treated picture of the Osmond family grinning inanely at the camera; the back cover a found colour photo from a family magazine, depicting a ghastly scene of bourgeois normality akin to the cover of Led Zep's Presence. The inner bag is printed with pretty hard-edged patterns that George Hardie NTA (who did so many graphics for UK sleeves in the 1970s) would not have been ashamed of. I suppose this heavy, knowing irony is one of Mego's trademarks, but a taste for wallowing in 1970s kitsch is nowhere to be found in the music; a less fitting array of imagery for this record I can't imagine.

ED PINSENT 11-2003

www.mego.at

Francis Dhomont

Jalons

CANADA EMPREINTES DIGITALES IMED0365 CD (2003)

At about the same time as the two Pierres, Schaeffer and Henry, were fooling about with tape after hours in the studios of Radio France, Monsieur Dhomont was reflecting on his recent experiments with magnetic wire recorders over a glass of cold rosé down in Provence, and generally coming to a lot of the same conclusions. Considered by all popular opinion to be one of the living greats of electroacoustic composition, he now divides his time between France and the more-french-than-french Québec, where he is one of the main players in what is referred to as the 'Montréal sound' (doesn't have quite the same ring to it as 'Motown sound'). Previously Dhomont's CDs have mostly been theme-based events, all pieces being part of a cycle of composition, certainly the case on his last two releases 'Forêt Profonde' and 'Cycle du Son'. This however is a collection of works dating from between 1985 and 2000. Not long enough to be really a retrospective, but odds and ends, some of which have appeared on other discs anyway.

Dhomont, more than some other electroacoustic composers, seems to operate in the juncture between the abstract and the referential; a place I've always preferred myself. One wonders then, just what it is exactly that he means when he refers to his work as 'acousmatic art', as a good deal of his material appears to be specifically not acousmatic. At least not in the Pythagorean sense. This attitude is evident on tracks like 'Vol d'Arondes', which he describes as '…a summer evening, the window open wide on the slowly darkening sky…the sounds of the village preparing for the night festival'. Along with obviously programmatic elements, this is pretty much what we hear. I have to say I'm a little lost then when he goes on to explain that the music is connotative but not representational. Which does sounds a bit like somebody has got a slight case of semantics to me. This continues on the second track here 'En cuerdas', a solo tape rendering of another composition for guitar and tape commissioned by the Colombian guitarist Arturro Parra. The sound is described as that of 'strings made virtual, transformed by computer processes', which indeed it is. I'm still hearing a fair amount of obvious guitar noise though as well, so if that's not representational...

Things move more toward the purely abstract with tracks like 'Les moirures du temps' and 'Lettre de Sarajevo'. The latter is certainly an unnerving listen, but it is hard to hear it speaking of the horror of early nineties Sarajevo as Dhomont suggests. I would even go so far as to suggest that the good Monsieur is thoroughly involved in precisely the same aesthetic games he claims in the liner notes to not be content with. Last time I looked the creation of any piece of art involved aesthetic choices on the part of the creator, unless you want to count out chance operations. For an artist to suggest otherwise, c'est ridicule. 'Drôles d'oiseaux' is the only completely electronic piece here, the only one Dhomont has composed: a representation of a forest as a metaphor for the unconscious. Again I can imagine without too much difficulty that many of the sounds produced here could be the electronic doubles of various forest flora and fauna. If so, why do they not seem to be regarded as such? On the one hand Dhomont seems to be indicating, firstly by the titles of the pieces and his notes on them, that things are as they immediately seem. He then suggests that this is not the case at all, and in fact the sounds are indicative of something entirely different altogether. As with much electroacoustic music there seems to be a lot of conceptualizing behind it that for me at least doesn't translate into sounds heard. The track where Dhomont does seem to be most successful in his endeavours to marry conception and perception is, perhaps ironically, from a film soundtrack. In 'Un Autre Printemps' he does appear to harness the sounds of the natural world to produce something greater than its sum of individual parts. The surrealistic melding of a dog bark with a violin here is a small and humorous case in point.

One of the pleasant things about this CD given the sometimes long and difficult nature of most of the tracks is that they are balanced by a few shorter ones. 'Un Autre Printemps' clocks in at a mere six minutes, the two other short pieces being 'Studio de nuit' a three-minute perfect electroacoustic piece that does everything the title suggests (for once perhaps), and the last track here 'L'électro', a vaguely amusing vocal game that won't trouble you for much more than a minute.

I'll be the first to admit that I'm probably not getting everything that there is to be had from this CD. It's not easy going, par for the course for a lot of stuff like it. There also doesn't seem to be a lot to tie these pieces together other than as being some sort of round up of Dhomont rarities. I do think that all the best concepts in the world don't really mean much if they don't translate to physical realities. To produce work that sounds for all intents and purposes like one thing, and then claim for all you're worth that they're not in fact that at all does seem a little spurious. With an attitude like that pretty soon you'll be reading Derrida and telling me that he's not obfuscatious in the least. Still, it's hard to find nary a bad word said against the good Monsieur, and to his enduring credit he does do a good line in eye-patches.

AARON ROBERTSON

4580 Avenue de Lorimier, Montréal,
Québec H2H 2BS, Canada
info@electrocd.com
www.electrocd.com

Cambodian Rocks, Neung Phak and 3-Hurel

EXOTICA FROM OTHER LANDS BY JENNIFER HOR

Various Artists

Cambodian Rocks

USA PARALLEL WORLD PW-CD6 CD (2000)

This compilation of 22 unnamed tracks by various uncredited musicians and singers is a valuable historical document and survey of a highly eclectic and sophisticated pop/rock music scene that existed in the small Asian country Cambodia during the late 1960s/early 1970s. During this period, political and economic mismanagement and corruption combined with the deliberate extension of the Vietnam War into Cambodia and Laos by the US (and the entanglement of Cambodian and Vietnamese Communist forces), followed by the withdrawal of US military forces from Vietnam, left Cambodia to the assault of the Khmer Rouge on what the Communists perceived to be a debased Americanised culture, and in no time at all, music as well as much of the rest of Cambodia's culture and a large proportion of the population was virtually wiped out in the drive to create a Maoist state. So it's a miracle that the music on this CD managed to survive the post-Year Zero upheavals to be found by compiler Paul Wheeler almost by chance while doing his (presumably) touristy backpacker thing in Cambodia.

What astonishes most about these recordings is not the mixture of musical styles found on each track but the confidence, technical virtuosity and playful wit of the musicians in combining genres so that they seem to be passing comment on the music. The players' timing is impeccable on all tracks and their takes on guitarists famous at the time (Jimi Hendrix and Carlos Santana) are fresh and spot-on. The production can vary in clarity as some tracks are deliberately fuzzy and distorted (an ingenious solution to the problem of having to use primitive recording technology and other countries' cast-offs in a tropical country where everything deteriorates quickly) . As for the styles themselves, I will list what I heard in some of the tracks below plus some items of interest about particular tracks. Depending on your musical knowledge and experience, you may hear different things from what I hear: for example, I asked someone to hear this CD and he said he heard the Beatles on every track; another person heard Led Zeppelin on an early track (given that Jimmy Page as a former session musician played lead guitar on hundreds of pop records from 1963 to 1966, some of which must have turned up in Cambodia, this isn't a surprise) until the singing started - I should add many songs feature excruciatingly high-pitched female vocals and are all sung in the Khmer language:

Track 1 - strong opening Beatlesque piece with teasing male vocals

Track 2 ('I Am Sixteen' sung by Ros Sereysothea) - surf music and Jimmy Page/Jimi Hendrix guitar meet high-pitched acid female vocals, rugged bass rhythm

Track 4 - strong rhythm 'n' blues style with proto-punk screaming male vocals; this may be the cover of Booker T and the MGs' tune 'Hip Hug Her' critic Kevin Nutt refers to in his on-line article 'First They Killed The Musicians'

Track 5 - a reworking of the Santana version of 'Black Magic Woman' with an interesting percussion pattern and Santana-like guitar breaks

Track 6 - ska / teenage surf party music with a sassy punk female singer; Nutt calls this Poly Styrene meets Screaming Jay Hawkins circa 1958

Track 7 - moptop Beatlesque piece with organ and surf music guitar

Track 8 - affectionate gravelly male vocal take on James Brown (including the grunting) with organ backing, quite funny

Track 9 - girl-group bubblegum pop with Hendrix-style lead guitar throughout

Track 10 - stately Cambodian folk song with mind-bending guitar intro, a Santana guitar solo outro and a peculiar rhythm that seems to vary the speed of the song

Track 12 - suave male crooner meets Santana and Latin American cha-cha rhythms

Track 13 - reworking / cover of old 60s standard 'Gloria'

Track 14 - Cambodian folk song gets a fuzzy organ / guitar treatment with squeaking acid male vocals

Track 17 - girl-group singing an Asian folk tune set to Santana-style cha-cha music with a production so 60s acid, your CD player's innards will be frying

Track 18 - Cambodian folk song in the style of mid-60s Beatles pop complete with Harrison-style guitar and Ringo Starr-like drum rolls (Sereysothea possibly singing here)

Track 19 - bubblegum pop singing with organ accompaniment and touches of garage rock

Track 20 - Cambodian folk song meets reggae and 60s rhythm 'n' blues; an accordion features throughout on the reggae rhythm

Track 22 - sounds like a cover of a 60s nostalgia-pop piece

For me the best tracks are 1 - 7, 9, 10, 12, 17 - 20 and 22. A lot of tracks sound as if only the chorus is being sung and what passes for verses is taken over mostly by short Santana or Hendrix-style lead guitar breaks - this suggests such songs are cover versions. In an age when pop /rock lyrics were of a pretty low standard, revolved around a banal theme and most people didn't listen to them anyway but just wanted to dance, this makes sense. That the compilation sounds unified suggests one band or perhaps a community of musicians and singers who all knew and helped one another - sort of like Amon Duul before they split into Amon Duul and Amon Duul 2 or even Godspeed You Black Emperor without the ideology. (Possibly they were related or came from the same area - in some cultures, music and entertainment were the domain of a family or families and the profession passed down the generations.) Of these artists, I've discovered from the Internet that Ros Sereysothea sang on track 2 and maybe a few others; quite famous in Cambodia in those days, she later fled to the United States and now lives in Long Beach, California. Not so lucky was another famous singer, Sin Sisamouth, who more than likely features on Cambodian Rocks though I don't know which tracks he's on (tracks 5 and 12 look suspicious), and who was once known as the Cambodian Elvis Presley / King of Khmer Pop; he was shot dead by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. Unfortunately, the CD carries no information on the people involved in these recordings.

Even if Hendrix and Santana are not part of your scene (I normally try to keep well away from Santana myself), all the songs on Cambodian Rocks are great fun to listen and dance to, and if you're not a dancer you'll be kept busy anyway trying to identify all the influences and genres that appear on each and every song. And you will also be amazed that musicians in a seemingly obscure ex-colonial backwater state could have mastered Western pop and rock so well that they actually extend its possibilities and horizons in ways that are emotionally affecting, yet playful and affectionate to the originals. Above all, when you listen to Cambodian Rocks, you get a glimpse of a lost alternative world in which the Cambodian people, free from big power politics, stride confidently into the late 20th and early 21st centuries with a society that blends the best of Western and Khmer / Southeast Asian cultural heritages, a world of which traces still survive in Cambodia and Khmer expatriate communities around the globe, judging by the number of Internet websites I found devoted to Khmer pop music and (surprise!) Sin Sisamouth: he lives on in cyberspace.

JENNIFER HOR

Contact: Parallel World, 332 Bleecker St, #27-D, New York, NY, 10014, United States
Reference: Kevin Nutt, 'First They Killed the Musicians: Cambodian Rocks (Parallel World CD-6)', http://wlt4.home.mindspring.com/adventures/reviews/cambodia.htm

Neung Phak (Mono Pause)

Neung Phak (Mono Pause)

USA ABDUCTION 25 CD (2003)

The US West Coast experimenters Mono Pause impersonate a Southeast Asian pop band under

the name Neung Phak (Thai for 'Mono Pause') on this debut album under this guise. Most of the music here appears to be covers of Thai, Laotian and Khmer pop songs and the band more or less stays quite faithful to the style of the original songs to the extent that the musicians veer perilously close to the kind of generic 'suburban Asian restaurant in a Western city' kind of pop music, at least from the period in the 70s before the music was taken over by synthesisers, drum machines and dance beats. Obviously NP are happy to establish their credentials as SE Asian pop impersonators by demonstrating how well they can play and replicate the different styles like Thai country and morlam (a type of traditional folk music adapted to contemporary tastes) in case World Music purists wanting to see museum-preserved SE Asian traditional and folk music performed only by SE Asian people howl them down.

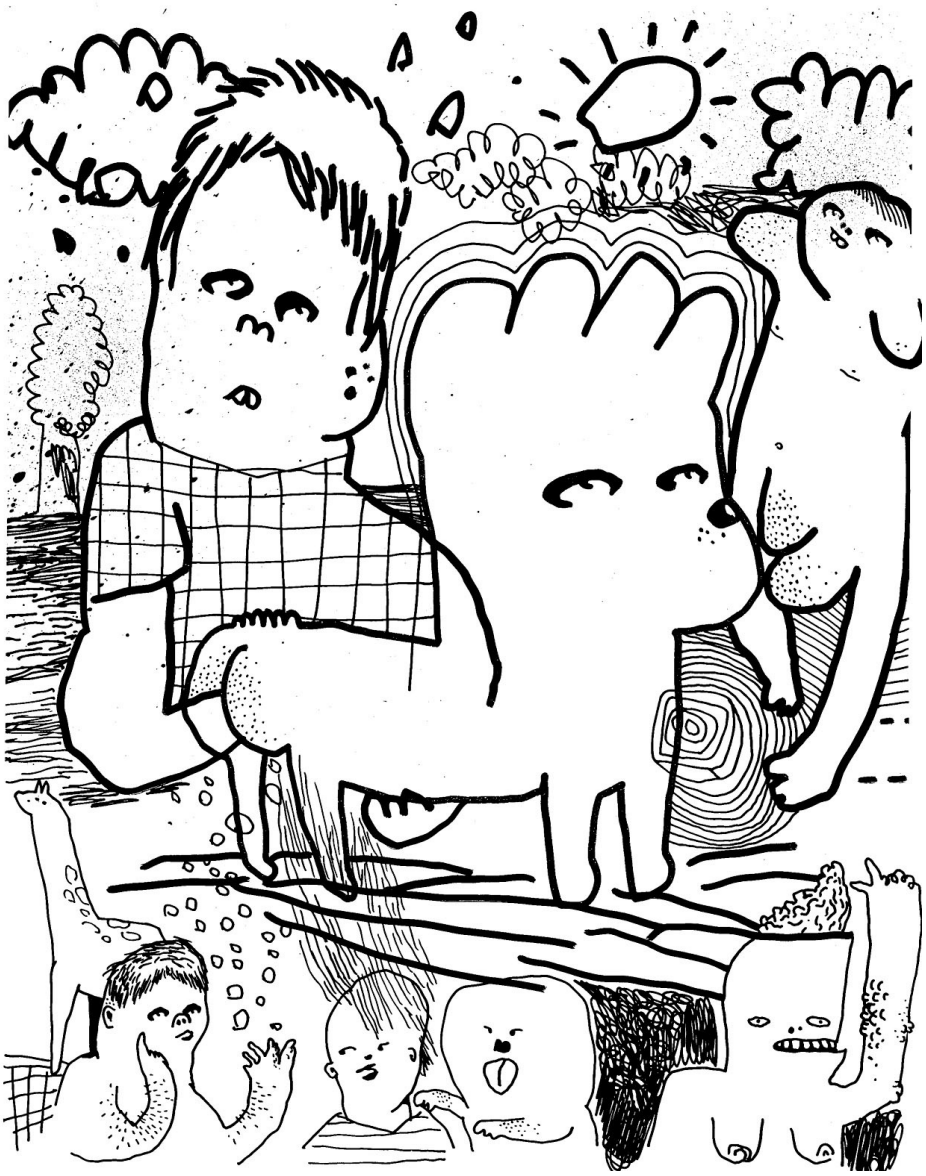
Best tracks include 'Tui Tui Tui' on which vocalist Diana Hayes twitters away in a sugar pop voice guaranteed to spin your head faster than listening to any number of psychedelic pop / rock records all at once will; 'Sat Ti Tuy' which is a bouncy and infectiously joyful Cambodian Rocks-inspired number; the short and sweet sad/happy instrumental piece 'Cam Huong Theme'; and 'Ko Muay De Ka', mainly for the unexpected keyboard and other effects and the subtle trance mood that envelops the vocals. The track 'Chu Guana Tong Bei Bo', in some ways not all that far from slick commercial '70s - '80's Asian pop in the melody and Hayes's style of singing (Hayes's style, once you get used to it, doesn't vary much at all), is interesting in the way it speeds up and slows down and changes beat and rhythm. About two-thirds of the way through the CD, the music starts to sag but perks up with 'Morlam Pee Bah' which recreates a Thai or Laotian mini-drama in which the male and female vocalists sing and yell at one another and the music jumps all over the house in response to all the fireworks. There is background shouting as well and I wonder if this is meant to reproduce an audience response. The musical passages demonstrate inspired playing.

It will be interesting to see where Neung Phak can take this act: I'm hoping they can include more singers, male and female, and perhaps more musicians to build up some sort of community or collective; and that they can include more of their own compositions with some improvisation along SE Asian musical themes and structures - in this respect, 'Morlam Pee Bah' points the way. There are tracks on the debut album with quite meaty rhythms and melodies, with electric guitars, a jazzy brass band effect and enthusiastic drumming, and the combination of modern Western musical instruments and elements with SE Asian ones should continue.

Brought to you under the auspices of the Sun City Girls' label Abduction Records with a credit to Scott Colburn of Climax Golden Twins.

JENNIFER HOR

Abduction, PO Box 9611, Seattle, WA, 98109, USA
www.MonoPause.net/neungphak



3-Hurel

Hurel Arsivi

USA WORLD PSYCHEDELIA LTD
WPC6-8463 CD (2003)

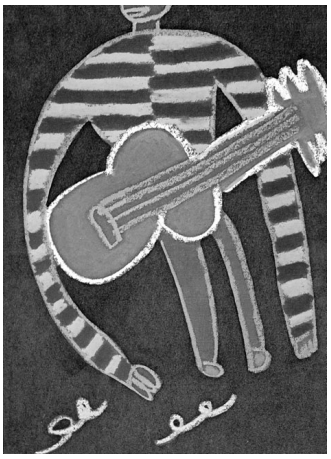
One gem of the Turkish pop scene in the early 1970's was a trio of brothers from the city of Trabzon in northeastern Turkey. This album, Hurel Arsivi, is possibly 3-Hurel's most musically accessible recording for us Westerners - it's cunningly disguised as a collection of 12 pop songs, some of which may revolve around themes of love or longing, judging by the mood and the singing on some tracks which almost verge on anguish, but listen carefully to the intros and the instrumental passages, and you'll find real gold nuggets of native Turkish folk / Western pop/rock fusions. Whichever instrument or style of music they turn a hand to, whether it's tickling honky-tonk piano ivories, pounding the drums or playing lots of bright, sharp-edged guitar and saz solos, these Hurel boys sure prove themselves more than adept masters. The best tracks include the CD's opener 'Kol Basti', the most Middle Eastern-sounding piece and a real thriller it is too, with a galloping rhythm, whoops and chants and a wonderful sound; and then there is 'Sevenler Aglarmis' with its long guitar solo which isn't fiddly or technical, plus a passage of rhythmic percussion and saz improvisation - marvellous! The album is structured so that all the blatantly cheesy commercial pop songs are near the beginning and the best tracks are towards the end (these would have occupied the B-side on the original vinyl release) - even in those days in Turkey, musicians had to contend and compromise with the music industry's dictates. Although the pop stuff can be an ordeal to sit through, the Hurel brothers do seem to put on a brave face and end up enjoying themselves when they can, and the second half of the album more than compensates for the fluff. You come away with the realisation that this record is a real jewel of Turkish '70's psychedelic pop/rock and that it is an important cultural document for the Turkish people.

JENNIFER HOR

www.aquariusrecords.org
www.forcedexposure.com
Addendum: The saz is a long-necked lute with frets. Turkish musicians sometimes play the saz miked to bring out the full sound.

Baggy's Bag O'Discs

In the early to mid 90's there was a glut of Jad Fair / Half Japanese releases thanks to the support of certain enthusiastic British labels and patronage of devotees like The Pastels and Teenage Fanclub. The situation was akin to the Euro Butter Mountain problem: tons of what was no doubt palatable produce but how are we to digest it all? The intervening quieter years have given us a welcome breathing space and a chance to re-assess the hyper-active kid creativity of the fellow from Maryland with the round black specs.



Jad Fair and Jason Willett

Superfine

USA PUBLIC EYESORE 67 CD (2003)

...is a huge banquet (145 songs!) of short edgy pieces put together with Jason Willett, a long time collaborator of Jad's who once claimed to be possessed by the spirit of the late Joe Meek. There's no obvious sonic similarity with the Meekster but there is a working method that produces wonders out of meagre resources. Primitive compressed guitar / bass / drums tracks form the cheesecake base for Jad's vocal improvs through which Willett weaves busy mutated loops and the odd squirt of soprano sax. The whole messy sprawling disc becomes a positive celebration of a whatever-comes-into-your-head racket, with extra helpings of yelping and shouting. It's what punk rock should be more often and leaves you nodding in agreement with Jad's repeated slogan 'Hooray Life Is Great'.

Another 90's mini-phenomenon that became tough to digest was the flurry of bedroom electronic bands who loosely came in the wake of Stereolab. Just how many hopeless small British labels put out spluttery moog and girl vocal obsessed records stacked to the brim with tired retro-isms? Perhaps only the fast evolving Broadcast have gone onto even better things, though I did always have a soft spot for the mysterious recordings of Piano Magic.

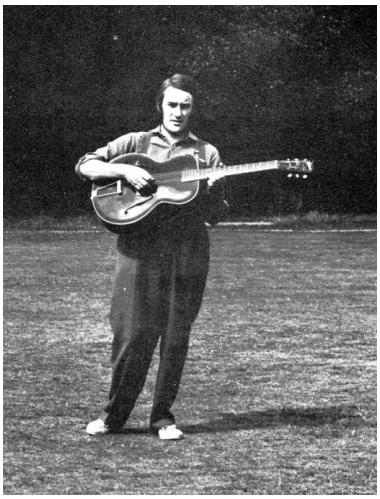
George

The Magic Lantern

UNITED KINGDOM PICKLED EGG 47 CD (2003)

...is a disc by a new Mancunian duo of Michael Varty and Suzy Mangion, formerly the vocalist of Piano Magic. The George sensibility is much more song based, and the instrumentation mainly acoustic with highly sparing interventions of electronics only to add atmosphere to the record's extremely intimate mood. The Magic Lantern's suite of beautiful songs makes no vulgar attempt to grab your attention and it's inward looking focus put me in mind of the woody folkisms of Vashti Bunyan, previously the last word in this kind of hushed English fireside reverie.

One of the great musical enigmas to ponder while waiting for the alarm clock to ring on a January morning is just how did way left of centre groups like Henry Cow and Slapp Happy get high-street record releases on Richard Branson's Virgin label in the 70's? My tender early teenage psych was certainly glad this happened. Stern, super dynamic diatribes of Utopian post-Marxist dogma like In Praise Of Learning struck me as the ultimate in boundary pushing originality. Only much later did I realise Fred Frith and company's avant chamber rock owed quite a bit to the ensemble work-outs of The Mothers Of Invention. This in no way detracts from the greatness of these British records and it's great to see the CD re-issues by ReR now nestling in the racks.



Fred Frith

Guitar Solos

UNITED KINGDOM ReR / FRO 02 CD (2002)

...is another of these welcome re-issues by Chris Cutler, Frith's cohort in art rock. Originally released in 1974 on the Virgin subsidiary Caroline, this primer of guitar possibilities (scraping, bulldog-clipping, de-tuning, volume-control abuse) still sounds contemporary and must've scared the pants off seventies kids who thought Eric Clapton was somehow 'alternative'.

The shadow of the mainstream seventies, it seems, still hangs heavy on musicians born years after that decade sputtered out into punker disintegration. For some youthful souls the era has become a golden age benchmark of 'real' playing before all that synthesised rave malarkey and those dumb Pop Idols took over.

Trespass

In Haze Of Time

FRANCE MUSEA FGBG 4387.AR CD (2003)

...backs up the point with scarcely believable accuracy. A French release by a young contemporary Israeli trio, the insert proudly advises 'File Under Progressive Music'. The fact that this record sounds not just quite like but EXACTLY LIKE a lost Greenslade LP from 1973 reminds us all how Prog became the most conservative genre this side of Trad Jazz. All the components are here: classical pretensions in their lengthy Orpheus Suite, amazingly proficient more-notes-per-inch playing and some super-earnest vocalising. I've played this thing quite a few times as I've certainly been known to enjoy many an original era Prog item in my time and can only conclude that when the last series of Dr.Who ended Trespass hi-jacked the Tardis and now have it hidden in their studio.

JOHN BAGNALL

Public Eyesore: www.sinkhole.net/pehome
George: www.pickled-egg.co.uk
ReR: www.rermegacorp.com
Musea: www.musearecords.com

Rock Music

KRAUTROCK AND MALADROIT RHYTHMS, EXPLORED BY JENNIFER HOR

Amon Düül II

Tanz der Lemminge

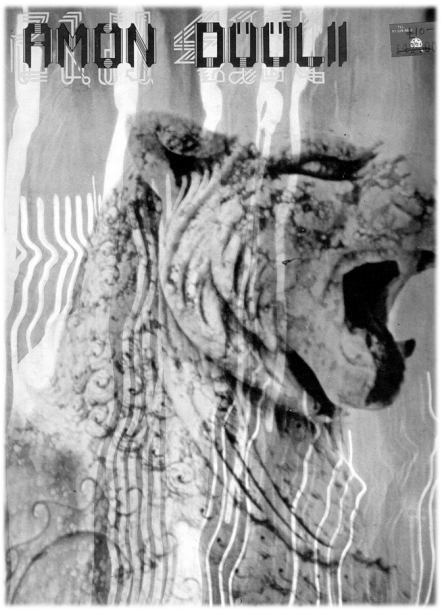
GERMANY REPERTOIRE RECORDS
LC08065 CD (2001)

For me this band hit its peak with its second album Yeti but Tanz der Lemminge, originally released as a double vinyl set in 1971, is also a worthy record especially if your taste extends more to snappy little melodies, the odd bit of spaced-out eccentricity and more experimental atmospheric activity, and away from extended guitars-n-drums improvised freak-outs. Bear in mind too that at the time Tanz der Lemminge was being recorded, ADII had problems with people coming and leaving the band and financial problems, and you realise that just getting the album out was a major feat in itself, to say nothing of how it compares with its predecessor Yeti or the rest of the ADII canon.

The album divides into three uneven (as in length) and inconsistent (as in quality) parts. Tracks 1 - 4 constitute a mostly acoustic set called 'Syntelman's March of the Roaring Seventies' (the tracks also have their own titles) with the synth special effects in the background to provide the dreamy atmosphere. Compared to the rest of the album, this section is not that great despite flashes of melodic brilliance and guitar etude flourishes. The singing is a mixture of John Lennon and late 60s David Bowie, and if you don't care for either of these people (I can understand you may not care for Bowie since he can't seem to stop parodying himself these days), you can keep hitting the play or search function on your players to Track 5. From here on, ADII start applying more synths and special effects in a more active way to the music which also improves dramatically in this second section of 9 tracks, 'Restless Skylight - Transistor - Child'. The tracks are very short, nothing over 5 minutes, and the band keeps tossing off inspired and memorable tunes as if they were mere paddlepop sticks. Highlight of this section is the short and sweet 'Overheated Tiara' with a riff that sticks in the brain forever, delicate and dreamy touches to the rhythm section and a flyaway violin solo. 'Paralized Paradise' (sic) with the ADII trademark sinister guitar sound against John Wienzierl's befuddled vocals and 'H G Well's Take Off', a funny-silly piece with fingers-down-the-throat squawking, also rate highly in my book.

The third section 'Chamsin Soundtrack' (that's 'chamsin' as in 'khamsin'), clocking in at 33 minutes, slaps together a very long space ambient experimental piece 'The Marilyn Monroe - Memorial - Church' with three rock-out tracks that, er , sound like they might have been recorded during the 'Yeti' sessions, so straightforward and down-to-earth do they sound; indeed, one track even has a recycled riff from the B-side of the single 'Rattlesnakeplumcake' ADII released in 1969 or 1970. Well, it's ADII's riff after all, the band can do what it likes. However, compared to the long piece and the rest of the album, these pieces are somewhat of a let-down so they're best heard separately. The long track on the other hand is quite complex; though it barely hangs together, and you have to imagine it as a sonic soup through which tasty morsels float; by turns it is spiritual, uncanny, rich in mood and, towards the end, quite mad with lots of piano abuse.

It should be apparent by now that the album flops all over the place but its disoriented nature which would otherwise be a flaw for other bands in the early 70s, actually works in ADII's favour: it adds a rather endearing and whimsical eccentricity to the music at a time when ADII's space rock / so-called progressive contemporaries were lurching towards earnest and humourless self-importance. (You can guess which bands I have in mind! And aren't the Germans supposed to be the dour and humourless lot and the English the witty and eccentric ones?) Perhaps it's not as 'desert island disc' essential as the earlier Phallus Dei and Yeti but ADII's Tanz ... is more accessible to mainstream listeners; it reflects something of the space rock / progressive scene in the early 70s and for that alone can be considered an important historical / cultural document.



JENNIFER HOR

www.repertoire.de

Amon Düül II

Wolf City

GERMANY REPERTOIRE RECORDS REP 4987 CD (REISSUED 2002)

Of course this is not a patch on earlier albums like Yeti and Tanz der Lemminge and some of the tracks could've been a bit longer and their concepts expanded even (indeed, Wolf City originally was to have been a double LP like the aforementioned albums) but this fifth AD2 studio recording, originally released in 1972, still gets the nod from my hippie spirit. The trend towards more structured pop-oriented songs means much of the density and complexity of earlier AD2 music have gone and the material here is more assimilable, plus there's a spaciousness that allows the band to explore mood and atmosphere. However the shortness of some tracks in the interest of making a pop-friendly record means that the album seems a bit cramped in parts and not that satisfying. A mighty monster is lurking in the catacombs and sewers of Wolf City and the Düülers, had they not been under pressure within their own camp and without to make money and get attention, would undoubtedly have uncovered and released it.

Most of the tracks are good though I single out 'Wie der Wind am Ende einer Strasse' and 'Deutsch Nepal' as needing further attention: yes,

'Wie der Wind ...' establishes a nice mood and it flows well but I think it could've gone to a higher level if the idea behind it had matured a bit more and was more definite. The synthesiser playing here is pretty ordinary and we've heard that kind of boring sound before too many times. 'Deutsch Nepal' (ah, so that's where the Swedish goth/industrial band gets its name from! Now gotta find out where Brighter Death Now gets its name from!) clunks along fine with demented piano while guest vocalist Rolf Zacher declaims in his best 'Also sprach Zarathustra' voice about establishing a ruler warrior dynasty between fits of harrumphing. Is he about to have a coughing fit? Where's the tyrant's cough medicine? Quick, fetch, er ... fetch the doctor! Gosh, had this track been any longer, poor old Zacher would be convulsing on the floor and making a hacking racket while the piano goes right off the deep end ... yes, I'd like to hear that!

Apart from these two tracks, the rest of the album is a mixture of conventional pop-oriented work which tends to push guitarists Karrer and Weinzierl more to the forefront than the original AD collective manifesto would have allowed, the band's former spur-of-the-moment improvisation and dabblings in a more ambient direction. The title track, superficially a straightforward rock piece, has a smooth quality typical of early 70s rock at odds with the abrasive guitar feedback and sneering vocals; the realy scary thing about this song is that its theme of the modern urban dystopia is more relevant now than it was 30 years ago and the last line: '...they say: 'Johnny B Goode'!' (ha!) acquires a new sinister meaning in addition to all the other meanings it may have.

A good album which could have been great. Such is life.

JENNIFER HOR

www.repertoire.de

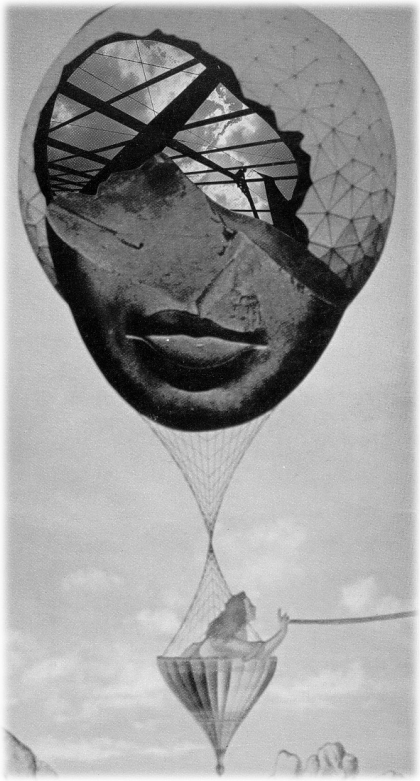
Amon Düül II

Made In Germany

GERMANY REPERTOIRE RECORDS CD REP4631-WP (REISSUED 1996)

My hippie brain doesn't like this CD much but even it recognises that as commercial pop records go, this conceptual rock opera affair about the history of Germany still beats the crap and more out of 97% of other pop records before and after 1975 when this album was first released. In an age where 'good' bands had to tackle every godforsaken musical style known to humankind to prove their worth to the music industry (so Led Zeppelin tackled reggae and disco and wrecked Middle Eastern music for Physical Graffiti and Queen went for burlesque and vaudeville on A Night at the Opera) so the Düülers knocked over tango, Bob Dylan parody, beerhall carousing, bubblegum girly pop and brass band blaring among other genres on this record but, having become totally professional studio musicians by 1975, they don't exactly leave all these musical styles smouldering away in fine white ash heaps, though they were capable of doing so. As for the history lesson, the record more or less spans the period from the 1860s to 1945 but any glaring omissions you find (and there are plenty), you may rely on Throbbing Gristle and early 80s Whitehouse to fill you in on some of the details.

Highlights (there are highlights!) include 'Wide-Angle' in which original Düüler Renate



Knaup - five original Düülers from way back in '68 were involved in this recording - accidentally wipes the floor with numerous generations of female pop singers past, present and future (including of course all the current usual suspects) when she's supposed to warble sweetly about some long-gone utopian socialistic living experiment propped up by pharmaceutical companies; and 'La Krautoma' which is a delirious though heavy-handed demolition job of a once-popular 70s lounge bar melody. Indeed, many demolition jobs are going on here - I detect a subversive attitude lurking throughout this record. I nearly do a demolition job on myself when I fall off my chair laughing over the ode to American ignorance and the cult of celebrity encouraged by the music media, '5.5.55' in which an idiot American radio jock interviews famous celebrity entertainer Adolf Hitler (snippets of actual speeches by Hitler are used) and if you think this number is tasteless, read Leni Brenner's 51 Documents: Zionist Collaboration with the Nazis or Norman Finkelstein's The Holocaust Industry and then you'll realise what tasteless is. Brief moments of musical / ambient brilliance throughout the CD in tracks like 'The King's Chocolate-Waltz' and 'Excessive Spray', lite-metal guitar solos and the relative lyrical sophistication hint at the once splendid and mighty beast that was Amon Düül II.

By 1975, many of AD2's fellow German Kosmische Musik bands were either defunct or had also succumbed to the pressures of the commercial music industry and the business of making a living; only Kraftwerk, who spent most of the early 70s making their own equipment and building their Klingklang studio anyway, were able to adapt to and take advantage of the changing music scene to present their own polished and distinctive style of German progressive music. While Kraftwerk forged ahead in the late 70s with recordings like Radioaktivitat and Trans-Europe Express, I understand AD2 released a few more albums in the late 70s and early 80s before winding up in 1983: my hippie brain warns me these records are düüll, düüller and düüllerer and begs me to stop. Now.

JENNIFER HOR

wwwrepertoire.de
(Editor's note: Amon Düül II of course did not wind up in 1983, as anyone who saw their European tour in the 1990s could tell you.)

Burzum

Filosofem

UNITED KINGDOM MISANTHROPY RECORDS AMAZON 009 / EYE 004 CD (1996)

I lost interest in black metal about 1995-6, at about the time this album came out - what we may call a case of bad timing. By the standards of black metal (and possibly heavy metal generally) at the time, Filosofem is quite an advance in music composition and broadens that genre's horizons considerably with its repetitive minimalist approach, emphasis on dark atmosphere, exposition of a particular individual's philosophy and the integration of synthesiser-generated ambient elements with the basic guitars/bass/drums foundation though the motivation behind this recording may be somewhat repellent. Burzum aka Christian / Varg Vikerenes aka Count Grishnakh recorded the album some time before starting his 20+ year prison sentence for murdering his former Mayhem band mate Euronymous; this incident brought Norwegian black metal to mainstream music's attention in Europe and defined that genre for many people. Burzum himself may not have heard the album's final mix before its release due to his situation. Although not technically sophisticated - the keyboard playing in particular is restricted to a few notes being played over and over (our man could have been playing with just two fingers) - Filosofem conveys a deep despair and melancholy through an almost ridiculously (by heavy metal standards) simple approach to song-writing, playing and production. 'Less is more' is a dictum that surely applies to this recording.

The first three tracks are the best: 'Dunkelheit' (Darkness) combines the plaintive pure tones of the synthesiser with the ongoing distorted guitar buzz effectively by having the two instruments play the same melody over and over - the harsh textures of the guitar and the slightly echoing pure synth notes induce a pained, depressed feeling. The singing here and on other tracks is also distorted and almost merges with the scouring guitar blasts. The next two tracks 'Jesus' Tod' (Death of Jesus) and 'Beholding the daughters of the firmament' (that is , seeing the Valkyries in their original vampiric harpy forms swooping down to collect the dead) have more conventional heavy metal rhythms but again the music structure is repetitive, minimal and trance-like. Tempos range from slow (tracks 1 and 3) to fast (track 2) though the music lacks the aggression and screechy singing associated with mid-90s black metal.

The pivotal track is the fifth whose title roughly translates from German as 'Circuit around the pillar of singularity' (that is, going around in circles - I'm using a German/English dictionary), a maddeningly repetitive and simple ambient piece played entirely on synth and running to 25

minutes (too long in my view) with no development, no climax and no resolution. It is most notable for its bleak and total nihilism. (The album expresses Burzum's rejection of Christianity and his adherence to Odin worship and what he believes are its values.) The track is bookended by two pieces 'Gebrechlichkeit I' and 'Gebrechlichkeit II' (my dictionary translates this as 'fragility' or 'infirmity' which seem more appropriate in this context than what's on the album, 'Decrepitude') which may respectively represent descent and ascent or vice versa.

After Filosofem, Burzum went over completely to synth-based ambient music, probably out of necessity; having an electric guitar in his cell might have been banned by the Norwegian prison authorities. He may still be an Odin worshipper but I suspect his Odin worship is a convenient cover for his neo-Nazi beliefs and has nothing in common with the Odin worship of Iceland where it is now an official religion. So it may be that Filosofem represents a high point in the career of an otherwise unpleasant character whose victim was probably more unlikeable than Burzum himself (I was going to tell you about Euronymous's moment of cannibalism but, nahhh) but black metal appears not to miss these two much now; certainly, having divested itself of its original hardcore neo-fascist/social Darwinist beliefs (except perhaps in Eastern Europe and Russia where it combines with resurgent nationalism) and moving more into the musical mainstream with all that the term implies, black metal music is doing quite good business around the world, thank you very much.

JENNIFER HOR

Misanthropy Records, PO Box 9, Hadleigh, Suffolk, IP7 5AU, United Kingdom

Erkin Koray

Elektronik Turkuler

USA WORLD PSYCHEDELIA LTD
WPC6-8461 CD (1999)

My little personal obsession of late involves prospecting for old 70's psychedelic rock gems in different parts of the world and recently I stumbled over this Turkish psychedelic rock classic which I believe was originally released in 1974. Koray who has been a fixture in Turkish pop/rock music for over 40 years (he released his first single in 1962 and continued recording well into the 80's, though his heyday appears to be the late 60's / early 70's), combines Turkish / Middle Eastern instruments and styles with those of Western pop / rock to create a set of distinctive and highly individual pieces within certain limitations: three tracks pander to a commercially minded Westernised audience and can be a bit lumpen at times while one track, 'Hele Yar' sounds like a kitsch treatment of a traditional Turkish folk song with a Western beat. I think this is called trying to have it both ways, yet Koray manages to pull off both tricks without sounding second-rate and the singing in Turkish is not at all self-conscious.

No, what I really want to do is concentrate on the recording's highlights: among these are three short Koray originals, all instrumental and improvised: in particular, 'Korkulu Ruya' is a strange mini-horror movie soundtrack performed on organ with Koray panting for breath as if he's just awakened from a hashish-fuelled nightmare - mighty weird in anyone's musical language and one would be hard put to find a similar piece recorded before or after 1974. 'Sir' has a sinister, exotic air sort of reminiscent of James Bondian spies venturing into an alien world full of subtle intrigues (it even begins with the sound of ringing telephones): there are three movements, the first and last being much the same and rolling by sedately, the second being very fast and allowing Koray to show off his guitar skills (remember, we're talking about the 1970's). 'Inat' is another guitar-dominated track, completely Western in its orientation and very atmospheric all the same, suggesting an extremely hot day down at the beach, any beach - Aegean, Mediterranean or Malibu for that matter. However these pieces, and indeed the entire album, pale beside the monster 'Turku' - this long meandering track with sonorous spoken vocals that echo, piercing oboe / bagpipe woodwinds, a percussion crash somewhere and crazy rhythms that speed up and slow down, along with the gorgeous liquid sounds of the oud (huff, huff, the oud is a Middle Eastern lute that is the precursor of the modern guitar), is a real mindfuck, psychedelic in every sense of the term. As all the chanting is in Turkish, I have no idea what Koray's lyrical concerns are here but I wouldn't be surprised if they turn out to be completely batty as the humour behind the music is very sly.

This album I recommend as THE introduction to Middle Eastern 70's psychedelic music - at least until I find another Middle Eastern 70s psychedelic rock album.

JENNIFER HOR

www.aquariusrecords.org (distribution)
www.forcedexposure.com/index.html

Kevin Shields

Valentine Days
Lost in Translation OST
American Whip by Joy Zipper
Evil Heat by Primal Scream

Heartbreaking to credit that it's now twelve years since My Bloody Valentine's Loveless got under the skin and infected the imagination of all who heard it. The kick-off track sounded like an orchestra playing on an open-top bus being driven at speed into a cliff wall, and it just got better from there. The haze of narcotic sex hungover most of the album, through to deathless closer 'Soon' which with its spastic beats knitted to concussed wall of guitar was the strangest fish ever to grace a thousand 'indie' dancefloors. Kevin Shields, the band's principal songwriter and mover-shaker, was revered as a minor deity, albeit one worshipped by bloodless shoegazing acolytes, most of whom also seemed to be signed to Creation Records at the time. That was over a decade ago, and the future seemed a very bright place indeed.

Then nothing. Not a slowdown - a dead stop, silence after the feedback. The sun had disappeared from view, leaving MBV addicts scrabbling in chill shadow. Legend has it that 'Loveless' bankrupted Creation and contributed to Alan McGee's nervous breakdown - good. If only it had been in time to stop Oasis. Subsequently signed to Island, no product has appeared on an Island imprint bearing the name of either MBV or Shields.

Of this stuff conspiracy theories are made. Presumably he's working. Obviously his internal quality-control valve is shot, otherwise he'd have released some golden shimmering pop horror. I'd love to steal those tapes. Maybe just hear them. In fact, just seeing them might be nice. That fabulous recent invention the Internet tells me that he's re-recording some tracks left unfinished from the 'Glider' EP which will find their way onto an upcoming MBV box-set; I'll believe it when I see it.

After what seems like a lifetime of cruel drought, these last few years have however seen Shields tentatively poke his head over the parapet and play a few notes. The soundtrack to Soffia Coppola's new film Lost in Translation sees th e first official new material to bear the Man's name - albeit only on f our tracks here, a couple of which only just break the two-minute mark. And it's familiar stuff which wouldn't be out of place on an MBV release; the dreamy fx-pedals noodling side of their split-personality rather than chainsaw geetars and eviscerating feedback. It's all perfect 'background' noise ideal for a film soundtrack. Shields actually sings once more on 'City Girl', a melancholy wonder of woozy harmonies. Tingly and tantalising, this quartet of tracks suggests the man still walks the walk, yet fails to provide the full-course meal we've been starving for. The album also includes an impressive new track by French electro-ambient funsters Air, as well as some hand-me-downs from the likes of Death In Vegas and the JAMC. But it goes by very pleasantly, with the unity and continuity such soundtracks need.

Not that Shields has been holed up on his own in a studio - he actually hit the road for a stint with Primal Scream, whose 'Exterminator' album completed their rehab after the lost Rolling Stones Pub Tribute Band years. Shields was instrumental in that album's twin shining peaks: the speedblast of sleazy geetars which was 'Accelerator' and the shattering remix of 'If They Move, Kill Em' shamelessly entitled 'MBV Arkestra', a ten minuteheadfuck you didn't want to end. Despite hosting some dirty rock hipshake numbers, 2002's Evil Heat sadly doesn't build on this promise, being somewhat unfocussed, with some karaoke pastiche numbers - although you'll hate yourself for liking the irresistible Krautrock simulacra that is 'Autobahn 66' and muggy schizoid electronica of 'A Scanner Darkly'. Again it's Shields' contributions which stand out, the insistent psychedelia of 'Deep Hit of Morning Sun' as an opener proving stronger than most of what follows.

Better better best for those needing an MBV fix is the second album from Long Island's gorgeous twosome Joy Zipper, whose American Whip has a few tracks produced by Shields, but the spirit and sound of MBV bleed through the rest of the set. The girl/boy harmonies that Shields and bandmate Belinda Butcher did so well are eerily echoed here, everything drenched in that warm fuzzy summery shimmer. It's druggily lovely stuff indeed. '33 Times' manages to be the sunniest thing you've heard all year with a suicidally despairing lyric.

Our dreams will continue to be wet with thoughts of a bona fide follow-up to Loveless for some time to come. These albums can keep us moist in the meantime.

JANSON HARRISON

INDEX

Index to artiste / performer names as they appear on the CD/LP cover. Names appearing in the text have not normally been indexed. Titles of records have not been indexed, except for those credited to Various Artists; these titles appear in italic.

Acid Mothers Temple and the Melting Paraiso U.F.O, 16
Agog, 83
Akchoté, Nöel, 126
Akiyama, Tetuzi, 11, 55
Ákos, Garai, 127
Aldea, Eric, 139
Alejandra & Aeron, 27
Aleph, 35
Alvarius B, 77
Ambarchi, Oren, 74, 128
Amon Düül II, 154, 155
Angels Of Light, 113
Animist Orchestra, 30
Antunes, Jorge, 107
Archer, Martin, 49, 72
Asano, Koji, 51, 74
Ashley, Robert, 105
Assumed Possibilities, 55
Audio Laboratory, 21

Bakr, Rashied, 52
Basinski, William, 144
Beban, Daniel, 90
Beequeen, 40
Beins, Burkhard, 50
Bepler, Jonathan, 140
Berthling, Johan, 128
Bip-Hop Generation [v.6], 34
Birchville Cat Motel, 126
Bisciglia, Damon, 83
Black Faction - Reworked, 72
Blank, 52
Bøe, Tore Honoré, 67
Bohman, Adam, 83
Borgmann, Thomas, 52
Bosetti, Alessandro, 50, 57
Broken Penis Orchestra, 131
Brophy, Philip, 146
Brötzmann, Peter, 52
Bruckmann, Kyle, 52
Bua, Matt, 100
Buildings, 137
Bunel, Régis, 57
Burt, Warren, 109
Burzum, 155
Butcher, John, 51
Butchy Fuego, 83

Camobodian Rocks, 151
Catlin, Tim, 91
Cerberus Shoal, 76-77
China: The Sonic Avant-Garde, 50
Chiossone, Ivan, 139
Chopin, Henri, 122-124
Circle O, 23
Comets on Fire, 81
Control R Workshop, 53
Corringham, Viv, 112
Crawford, Cal, 30
Cremaster, 36, 37
Cutler, Chris, 6

Dafeldecker, Werner, 54
Davies, Rhodri, 55, 56
Davis, Matt, 51
Decaer Pinga, 81
DEG, 24
Deutsch, Andrew, 30
Dhomont, Francis, 150
Dial, 137
Dieb13, 88
Dietrich, Donald, 5
Dimuzio, Thomas, 6
Doneda, Michel, 45
Drever, John Levack, 29
Drumm, Kevin, 4
Durrant, Phil, 51, 55

E.A.D.B.G.E, 91
EA, 127
Egg, T B, 41
Eglin, Fabrice, 149
Ehlers, Ekkehard, 129
Elggren, Leif, 20, 21, 23
Empire, Aleph, 7
Epps, Ian, 42
erikm, 148
Etron Fou le Loublan, 52
Evidence, 28

Fagaschinski, Kai, 57
Fair, Jad, 153
Fe-Mail, 67
Fennesz, Christian, 34
Fibrillation, 42
Fields, Scott, 106
First, David, 125
Flaherty, Paul, 82
Foussat, Jean-Marc, 46-48
Foust, Scott, 43
Fox, Robin, 74
Frequency Curtain, 127
Frith, Fred, 153
FUKUOKA, Rinji, 12

Geologists and Professional Tourists Volume 2, 107
George, 153
Glands of Eternal Secretion, 81
Goldd, Eric, 41
Grey Field Recordings, The, 142
Grossi, Piero, 108
Guapo, 77
Guerra, Anthony, 36, 54
Guilford, Paul, 56
Guilty Connector, 14, 17-19
Guitare Brothers, 143
Guthrie, Will, 56, 140

Haco, 12
Hafler Trio, The, 112
Haino, Keiji, 13
Haire, Doug, 28
Hammer, Joseph, 83
Hanson, Sten, 22
Hartman, Hanna, 111
Hausswolff, C M von, 20, 22
Hautzinger, Franz, 54
Hearings, 35
Hecker, 34
Heide, Edwin van der, 29
Herman Dune, 76
Hernando, Javier, 142
Hiromichi, Sakamoto, 12
HISS, 53
Horscroft, Scott, 75, 90
Hotz, Gregor, 57

In Memoriam Tarkovsky, 149

Jazzkammer, 66
Jeck, Philip, 114. 130
Jerman, Jeph, 30, 31
Jgrzinich, 31, 32
JMJ Trio, The, 88
Ju-Jikan: Ten Hours of Sound from Japan, 15
Junko, 12
Jutok, Kaneko, 14

Karkowski, Zbigniew, 49
Kelley, Greg, 53, 84-87, 106

Kingston, Greg, 140
Knead, 13
Koray, Erkin, 156
Krebs, Annette, 10, 50
Kurenniemi, Erkki, 105
Kuwayama-Kijima, 12

Lambert, Ross, 51
Larner, Brett, 10
Lehn, Thomas, 44, 51
Leimgruber, Urs, 45
Lescalleet. Jason, 3, 84
Licht, Alan, 109
Lindblad, Rune, 20, 24
Loam, 37
Locasta, Paul H, 149
London, Barry, 100
Love 666, 6
Lovens, Paul, 51

Mahall, Rudi, 57
Malcolm, Greg, 55
Marhaug, Lasse, 61-67
Massimo, 5
Matsubara, Sachiko, 54
Matthews, Kaffe, 39
Mattin, 37, 40
Mayr, Albert, 108
Mego presents playback device confusion..., 7
Menche, Daniel, 6
Mikas, Matt, 100
Moglass, The, 139
Mommur Chasma, 148
Monk, Geraldine, 49
Montgomery, Gen Ken, 131
Moon, 143
Moor, Andy, 51
MUKAI Chie, 13
Müller, Günter, 53, 55
murmur, 50
Music from the ONCE Festival 1961-1966, 145
Musica Transonic, 15
My Cat is an Alien, 89

Nagoski, Ian, 125
Nakamura, Toshimaru, 55
Nehil, Seth, 31, 32
Neuhaus, Max, 103
Neumann, Andrea, 50
Neung Phak (Mono Pause), 151
New Blockaders, The, 8-9
Ng, Martin, 74
nmperign, 53, 84
No-Neck Blues Band, 79, 80
No-Reynols, 70
Noetinger, Jérôme, 148
Nordic Miracle, The, 65
Noriko, Tujiko, 13
Null, K K, 4, 5
Nurse With Wound, 110

Ohkami No Jikan, 15
Omit, 73
Or MD COMP., 41
Orange Eye, 41

Palestine, Charlemagne, 104
Parker, William, 52
Parlane, Rosy, 37
Pateras, Anthony, 74
Paul 9, 137
People Like Us, 129
Pettibon, Raymond, 52
Pflum, Karsten, 71
Polio, 128
Price, Seth, 100
Pure, 38

Quintet Avant, 149

Rainey, Bhob, 53
Rallizes Denudes, Les, 16
Renard, Benjamin, 149
Revue OU, 122-124
Reynols, 68-70
Rippie, James Eck, 142
Roe, Tom, 100
Room 106, 42
Rosenberg, Scott, 52
Rowe, Keith, 10, 44-45
Rozenhall, Daniel, 24
Russell, Bruce, 55

Sagor and Swing, 140
Sanderson, Philip, 141
Satellite Footprint Shop, 71
Scheffner, Philip, 29
Schmickler, Marcus, 44
Schumacher, Michael J, 103
Sci Hi, 137
Scott Fields Ensemble, 106
Sheffield, Colin Andrew, 142
Shields, Kevin, 156
Shifts, 89
Shub Niggurath, 110
Sightings, 81, 100
Six Organs of Admittance, 79
Smith, Geoff, 111
Sons Of God, The, 21
SoundArt: The Swedish Scene, 25
Space is No Place, 77
Sparks, 136
Spring Heel Jack, 112
Stangl, Burkhard, 10, 88
Stern, Joel, 54
Stop, 35
Strch Prst Skrz Krk: A compilation of Christchurch Underground Music, 73
Strings Arguments, 72
Sturmschnell, Elektra, 141
Suchy, Joseph, 38
Sugimoto, Taku, 10
Sunburned Hand of the Man, 78
SunnO))), 82
Svstriate, 127

Tabata, Mitsuru, 14
Takahisa, Kikukawa, 14
Takehiro, Nishihide, 90
Tape, 90
Tart, 43
Tenney, James, 49
Tennis, 39
Tetaz, Francois, 146
Textu, 126
Thinkbox Editions 01: Settings, 141
3-Hurel, 152
Tilbury, John, 45, 54
Timeless Pulse, 51
Tin.RP, 143
Tipppetts, Julie, 49
Trespass, 153

V/W, 50
V/VM, 133-134
Vainio, Mika, 38
Verhagen, Darrin, 146
Vitamin B12, 130
Voisey, Ven, 28

Wall, John, 147
Wastell, Mark, 51, 55
Watson, Chris, 27
Whitehouse, 113
Willett, Jason, 153
Wilson, Rick, 112
Winstanley, Paul, 137-138
Wolf Eyes, 7
Wright, Seymour, 51

Xeno Volcano, 141
Xper Xr, 132

Yoshihide, Otomo, 10, 55

Zerang, Michael, 52

The SOUND PROJECTOR 12

MUSICAL CAJOLERY

BACKWARD-TAPED HORSEBACK MILITIA

MEETING of MENTORS